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Tribble's sermons

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TRIBLE'S SERMONS

BEING A SERIES OF

PRACTICAL AND DOCTRINAL DISCOURSES

BY J. M. TRIBLE,

LATE PROFESSOR OF NEW TESTAMENT LITERATURE, AND VICE-
PRESIDENT OF BETHANY COLLEGE.

WITH A BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR BY A.
MCLEAN, AND AN INTRODUCTION BY J. H. GARRISON.

"BEING DEAD, HE YET SPEAKETH."—HEB. 11: 4.

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INTRODUCTION.

No man occupies a higher office in this world than the minister of Christ's gospel. Viewed in the light of its results, no work known to men is more important than the faithful and efficient proclamation of the will of God to a sinning world. Those who tell us that the pulpit is to be superseded by the press have not duly considered the vantage ground of the former and its special function; but the press may greatly widen the influence of the pulpit by carrying its matured utterances on vital themes to a much larger number of persons. In this way these two great agencies may co-operate, as they should do, in the enlightenment and salvation of the world.

When, about one year ago, the death of Prof. J. M. Tribble, of Bethany College, was announced, a sense of *loss* to the Church and to the cause of religious reformation was universal among all who knew him. He had not yet reached the zenith of his powers, and yet his public utterances were marked by a maturity of thought and a purity of diction which gave promise of great service to the cause of Christ. It was a source of gratification to learn, afterwards, that he had left a number of sermons in manuscript, sufficiently complete to warrant their publication in book form. From these manuscript sermons enough have been selected for this volume, leaving a sufficient number for other volumes if they should ever be demanded. In this way the living and vitalizing thought of our lamented brother will continue to do its work among men even though he has gone to the higher activities of the life beyond. Being dead, he will yet speak

to unborn generations, not simply by the influence of his godly example, as did Abel, but through these powerful and penetrative sermons as well.

No careful reader of these sermons will fail to be impressed by their maturity of thought, their vigor of expression, their purity of style, their simple and logical analyses, their argumentative force, and their high spiritual tone. In them will be found, blended harmoniously, two qualities which some have thought to be irreconcilable, namely: unswerving loyalty to the principles of the Reformation, to which his life was committed, and a broad, irenic spirit, and a Christian charity which recognized the true and the good wherever he saw it. In this respect these sermons are worthy models for the study of the younger men in our ministry. The man who identifies pugnaciousness with faithfulness to convictions, and a narrow bigotry with soundness in the faith, is likely to do any cause more harm than good. It would be difficult to find in any series of sermons a better illustration of the contrary truth,—that fidelity and charity are the fruit of the same Spirit,—than is found in these model discourses.

In other respects than the one mentioned these sermons are worthy of the careful study of young preachers of the gospel. The habit which they show of going beneath facts to discover principles of action, and the application of these principles to our own time and environment, is a most profitable one. There is, too, a spiritual insight and intuition about these sermons which have reminded some of the sermons of Frederick Robertson. The fervent missionary zeal which they manifest cannot fail to stimulate the rising tide of enthusiasm for missions which is one of the signs of our times.

The young preacher who may be possessed of the fatal gift of fluency, and who is in the habit of trusting to the inspiration of the occasion for something to say, will find in the thoughtful sentences which make up these sermons a rebuke for his presumptuous neglect of hard study and patient,

painstaking preparation. He cannot fail to see here, on every page, evidence of careful thought and investigation. It is this fact which gives the sermons a permanent value and justifies their publication in this form.

Having had the pleasure of an intimate friendship with the author of these sermons for many years, and of being in close relation with him as a fellow-laborer during a part of that period, the undersigned would most heartily commend this volume to the Christian public, and especially to that brotherhood who knew and loved him best. May it serve to perpetuate, in a measure, the noble influence of a life whose duration among us seemed all too brief!

J. H. GARRISON.

ROSE HILL, ST. LOUIS, August 10, 1892.



J. M. TRIBLE.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

JOHN MEREDITH TRIBLE was born in Dunnsville, Virginia, August 18, 1851. His early education was received in a school taught by the sainted J. T. T. Hundley. He entered Bethany College in 1872, and was graduated in 1875. Among his classmates were E. T. Williams, E. V. Zollars, I. J. Spencer, T. B. Knowles, W. A. Davidson, C. T. Carlton, M. M. Cochran and A. B. Williams. Upon leaving college he entered at once upon the work of the ministry. He preached for the church in Norfolk, Virginia, two years; for the church in Franklin, Tennessee, three years; for the church in Memphis, Tennessee, two years; for the church in Buffalo, New York, six years; for the Central Church in St. Louis, Missouri, one year. Wherever he labored he built up the church. He widened the sympathies of his hearers, he raised their moral standard, he deepened their spiritual life. Thoughtful people were surprised and delighted with the originality and variety and beauty of his thoughts. It was not only in the pulpit that his peculiar powers were exhibited. His unpremeditated talks in the prayer-meeting, his addresses at the table of the Lord, his words of counsel to those who made the good confession, bore the stamp of his genius. On these occasions his fitly spoken words were like apples of gold in pictures of silver. In prayer he was marvelously gifted. In the pulpit, in his home, with the sick and the dying, he prayed as only a few of the greatest souls have been able to pray. For several years he was a corresponding editor of the *Christian-Evangelist*; one year he was office

editor. His expositions of the Sunday-school Lessons were a valuable feature of that paper. As a writer, his style was marked by clearness, force and beauty. The shortest paragraph had some happy turn of thought or felicitous expression. He touched nothing that he did not adorn. While he was preaching in Franklin, Tennessee, he was married to Miss Bessie Campbell. Four children were born to them—John, Sue, Campbell, and Bessie Graybiel. Mr. Tribble was seen at his best in his own home. His gentleness and considerateness, his sincerity and unfeigned faith shone there as nowhere else. In 1889 he was selected to fill the chair of Biblical Literature in Bethany College on the Thomas W. Phillips foundation. He entered upon his duties in September. He loved the place. The magnificent hills that stand round Bethany like sentinels, the fair and fragrant valleys, the shadowy waters of the Buffalo as they wander riverward forever, the glorious sunrises and sunsets, had an infinite charm for his poetic soul. He loved the old college, and spoke of her past with pride and enthusiasm and of her future with confidence. He loved the students, and felt that nothing was too good for them. His idea of a college was that it was a place to make men. The business of a teacher was not to impart information simply, but to call out the latent powers of the student, to make him think for himself, and to inspire him with lofty ideas. As he saw his pupils grow in knowledge and in reverence and in Christlikeness, he felt repaid for all his toil and sacrifice on their behalf. They were his joy and his crown. While teaching in the college he preached for the church. He spoke once every Sunday, sometimes twice. It was universally conceded that he was a worthy successor of the great men who filled this pulpit since the church was organized. In addition to his work as a teacher, editor, and preacher, he and Mrs. Tribble had charge of the Ladies' Hall. The inmates and guests'

will long remember his kindness, his courtesy, his sympathy, his abounding wit. In June, 1891, he was offered the Presidency of the college, but declined. He consented to serve as President one year. Three weeks before the session opened he fell sick. Physicians and nurses did all in their power, but in vain. He died on the 25th of September. His mortal remains rest in the cemetery on the hillside, near the graves of Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Robert Richardson and W. H. Woolery. His spirit is at home with the Lord.

ARCHIBALD McLEAN.

I.

THE KINGSHIP OF CHRIST.

“Blessed is the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.”—LUKE 19: 38.

THIS triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, as it is commonly and properly called, has been the occasion of much perplexity and no little offense. The point of difficulty is to reconcile this approach to the pomp and pageantry of earthly monarchs with the simplicity and humility of his own teaching and life. It was said of him by the prophet, “that he should not strive, nor cry, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets,” and that prophecy was fulfilled to the letter in the meek and quiet ministry which he spent among men. So he reveals that the kingdom of heaven, which he had come to establish, should not come with observation, with noise and show, with the blast of trumpets and the sound and fury of battle, but it should come quietly and gently, as the seed comes up out of the earth, and rises silently into blade and stalk and ear; as the leaven, which makes no sound, but softly and silently pervades the whole lump. So had been Christ’s course among his countrymen. He made no bid for fame; he sought not the approval and applause of the multitude; the shouts

and plaudits of the throng were no music in his ears. But on the contrary he avoided celebrity; he forbade the fame of his miracles to be spread abroad, and he often dismissed the clamorous multitude from his presence, or else fled from its loud acclamations and hid himself with his little band of disciples in the desert, in the mountain, or sometimes in the land of the stranger and the heathen. Now in this act of entry into Jerusalem, which is accompanied with rude multitudes, and so much of applause and honor, it is alleged that the Master for once lays aside his meekness and gentleness, and adopts the role and state of an earthly and temporal sovereign. And upon this conception of the case there have been many and various attempts to explain this apparently exceptional and incongruous incident in the life of our Lord.

The rationalistic and skeptical critics, notably Renan, have found in this entry into Jerusalem an evidence of the frailty and imperfection of Jesus. They see here the solitary instance in his life of a false and sinful ambition; the one conspicuous example of vanity and pride, in that Jesus not only suffered and consented to this worldly glorification of himself by the multitudes, but actually desired it, planned for it, and received it as his royal right and due. Looking over the whole of his marvelous life, they think they find here one conspicuous stain of vanity on its general brightness and beauty.

Others, with more faith and more friendliness to Christ, but with scarcely deeper insight into his character, have sought to acquit Jesus of this apparent vanity, by charging the public and jubilant manner of this entry into Jerusalem on his disciples and on the multitude, and seek to show that he was surprised and constrained into this vain show of sovereignty. These seem to forget that this scene was all anticipated by the Master and provided for beforehand. It was he who bade his disciples to go over into the village and find the young ass, which they should loose and bring to bear him in this royal procession. And the words of Christ accompanying that order are very significant and striking: "And if any man shall say aught to you, as you are unloosing the ass, you shall answer, *The Lord has need of him.*" There was, then, a divine necessity and intention in this procession, and it was an essential part of the Savior's work and mission, without the accomplishment of which he could not say, as he did say a few days later, "I have finished the work thou didst give me to do." This procession was a necessary part of the plan of Christ's redeeming work for man.

Some other interpreters have sought to make it appear that, while Christ consented to this pageant, if it may be so called, and even ordered and directed it, yet he did not do it of his own choice and preference, but accommodated himself to the

crude and carnal notions of the people, asserting his spiritual sovereignty and prerogative in this gross and carnal way, because the multitudes would receive it in no other. He was simply driven to the necessity of using such means to declare his Kingship and authority as the people would appreciate and accept. In a word, though the means are not altogether consonant with the simplicity and spirituality of his mission, yet they will more readily impress and convince the people than other means; and so it is a case where the end justifies the means.

Now all this reasoning is not only utterly unworthy of the name, but it overlooks or exaggerates utterly the simple and unique character of this royal procession into Jerusalem. It is not a pageant; it is not a display of earthly pomp and glory; it is not an imitation, not even a feeble imitation, of the magnificence and demonstration of earthly sovereigns. I suppose if any royal personage of the time, one of the Cæsars for example, had beheld this multitudinous and disorderly procession, a mere mob it would have been called, a company of peasants, men, women and children indiscriminately thronged together, a body which one centurion and his band might have easily dispersed, he would have smiled at the thought of calling that a triumphal march, a royal procession, the entry of a king into his capital to receive his throne and his crown.

In the first place, it was a perfectly voluntary and spontaneous movement on the part of the people. Jesus anticipated it, but he did not order it; nor did he assume to direct it when it began. There was utterly lacking all that attempt at effect, that endeavor to inspire awe and fear by the orderly and regular array of soldiers, that ranking and filing of men into columns and sections, which makes the appearance of an army so formidable. We call this a triumphal entry, and so it was; but how little like those splendid triumphs in which the conquerors and kings of that age loved to appear—a vainglorious display, a solid array of soldiery, a dense multitude of chariots and horsemen, a mournful march of captives, a conspicuous exhibition of the trophies and treasures that had been wrested from the power of the enemy! This, too, was the celebration of a triumph; but it was of a triumph that was not yet manifest—the triumph of an apparent failure; the triumph of meekness and gentleness and love, of truth and righteousness; the triumph of suffering and death; the triumph of the cross of shame over all the envy and malice of men, and all the malign machinations of Satan. The triumph of all this Christ beheld as he went on in that procession with the multitudes; but saw it from afar, saw it as the issue and outcome of his ministry and mission on earth. But after all it was not such a triumph as would have satisfied the ambition of an earthly

potentate. It was a mere mingling of multitudes: the Galilean multitudes, who had reached the city the day before for the purpose of celebrating the great passover feast and were still encamped, perhaps, on the sides of the Mount of Olives, and now poured forth from their tents to honor the great prophet; the Bethany multitude, now raised to a high pitch of enthusiasm by the recent resurrection of their townsman, Lazarus, and ready to follow Jesus to his throne; the Jerusalem multitude, who came crowding out of their gates to meet them—all go singing and shouting to the temple, crying, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” And yet it was a mere popular uprising, which will presently subside, perhaps to appear against him to-morrow.

But if we need anything further to disabuse our minds of the thought that this procession is a pageant, let us turn to Him who is the central figure of it all, and in whose honor it originates. Jesus rides into Jerusalem, not as a warrior whose hand rests on the hilt of a sword, often stained in the blood of his enemies, and which is ready to be drawn at any moment to strike down him who questions his right; but his hands are uplifted and outstretched, as if in blessing. Not on the fiery war-horse, or in the flashing chariot, does he come to his people; but sitting on an ass, the very symbol of meekness and peace, and asserting here, as always in his ministry, the peacefulness and mild-

ness of his reign. Strange, indeed, that any should see in this appearance of the Master any approach to that pride of power and earthly glory which distinguishes the princes of this world.

I. Does it not appear plain, then, that this entry into Jerusalem is no mere show of worldly pride or earthly glory, but the spontaneous homage of the people on the one hand and the assertion of the meek and peaceful character of his kingdom on the other, and so is entirely and conspicuously consistent with the whole tenor of his life among men? Still, this procession and entry into Jerusalem has a striking and special significance which we must not overlook. It was the assertion of his kingly right; the avowal in a most impressive way of what he afterwards acknowledged to Pilate, that he was the King of the Jews and of the world. Jesus came into the world to fulfill a three-fold office. He was a prophet or teacher to call men to repentance, to show them the way of salvation, and to reveal to them the nature and the principles of the kingdom of heaven.

Then he was a priest, who should offer his own blood as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. He was in himself both the priest and the victim, who laid down his life for the redemption of the race. But he was also a King, with authority to command and power to establish and enforce his authority. The prophets foresaw him in all these offices. One foresaw him as a teacher, making the

highway of holiness plain to the minds of men, so that none need err therein; another saw him as the priest, offering his own life on the cross, as a lamb to take away the sins of the world; but another, Zechariah, beheld him as a King coming to the holy city, and exclaims, "Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh unto you, meek, and sitting on an ass." It was to proclaim in a most impressive and unmistakable manner his right to rule in Israel, as well as to declare the character of that rule, that he made his public entry into Jerusalem amid the hurrahs and hosannas of the multitude. This was the great proclamation of his sovereignty, and was made so public and conspicuous lest his people should mistake him as being only a great teacher and prophet, and not the King and Messiah for whom they looked. And this entry into Jerusalem has this peculiar purpose and purport, also, that it was Christ's last call to Jerusalem and the Jewish people to receive their King. Therefore, it was his loudest and most impressive call. As if to leave them without excuse for the rejection of the Son of God, he now proclaims his royal right in a way which they all might understand. And so they did, though they did not all consent to it. Many, indeed, broke into a joyous acknowledgment of him, saying, "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven, and glory in the highest." Even the children in the temple

joined joyfully in the royal acclamation. But the rulers and leaders were resolute and relentless in their rejection of him, and asked that he would rebuke these acclamations, little conceiving that these simple souls were acknowledging a divine, a glorious truth, and that truth cannot be silenced, but sooner or later, and in some way or other, must find utterance, even if the very stones of the street must cry out in its behalf.

II. I have dwelt so far on the exposition and explanation of this event in our Master's ministry, because I think it is generally not apprehended or appreciated by us as befits its great significance. Suffer me now to press, with all earnestness, its great practical lesson, which is, that Jesus Christ is not only a teacher whom we should hear, and a Savior, whom we should trust, but a King who is to be obeyed. There be many who praise and prize the teaching of Christ, who will neither trust him nor obey him. There are three mountains in which Jesus appeared in his three different offices while he dwelt upon earth. It was on a mountain, Mt. Hermon probably, in which he appeared as the great Teacher, declaring to his disciples and the multitudes the laws of the kingdom of heaven. It was on Mt. Calvary that he appeared as a Savior, giving his life as a sacrifice for the sin of the world. And it was on the Mount of Olives that he appeared as a King, claiming all authority and laying his commission and commands upon

the apostles, and through them upon all the world, before he ascended to the throne of his glory. Many will follow Jesus up into Mt. Hermon, and hear him as a teacher, and applaud his teachings, but will not follow him up to Mt. Calvary, and trust in him for salvation. But many more are willing to follow him to Calvary, even, and see in his death their own deliverance, who will not follow him into the Mount of Olives and own his authority as King. Even the professing ministry of the gospel fail to exalt Christ in all his offices. Some will exalt his teaching, but shun to declare him as a Savior, and pass lightly over his great sacrifice, in which the Scripture says he suffered the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. Then others urge his office as teacher and present him faithfully in his office as Savior, but do not press his claims as King; do not urge his commandments as imperative. It often happens, alas! that those passages which assert the authority of Christ, and which convey to us his commands, are shunned as if they were no important part of the gospel; and, indeed, as if they were infected with some deadly disease which made it dangerous to approach them; or, as if our lips were polluted in quoting them.

Now, Christ is able to save to the uttermost. But in order to have his salvation he must be accepted to the uttermost. He must be owned in all his offices—as Prophet, Priest and King; as

Teacher, Savior and Master. He must be heard, trusted and obeyed. We must not only confess, with Nicodemus, that he is the teacher sent from God; and, with the Samaritans, own him as Christ, the Savior of the world, but we must join in the hosannas and acclamations of the multitudes: "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord." For he is the author of eternal salvation to them that obey him.

II.

FAITH AND HOPE.

“ Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen.”—HEBREWS 11: 1.

IT is a matter of perplexity and distress to many sober and thoughtful minds, that some of the most common and indispensable elements of a true life are so difficult and apparently impossible of definition. We all agree that faith is absolutely essential to a man's life. Not only the spiritual, but the natural man as well, must walk more by faith than by sight. Man's faith in his fellow-man is the means by which his own life is sustained. If we should preach a gospel of universal distrust among men, and get it believed, we should not only stop the progress of the race, but we should effect its ultimate and even speedy destruction. If some malign spirit should desire to kill off the human race, the shortest and simplest way to this end would not be to destroy the supplies of wealth, the accumulations of property and the stores of food which men have amassed, nor even to destroy the productiveness and fertility of the soil; but simply to destroy faith in men, and put in its place universal suspicion and distrust. Kill man's faith and you have struck his death-blow. Is not the

great difference between savagery and civilization a difference of faith between man and his fellow-man? The savage tribe is utterly distrustful of its neighboring tribe, and so there can be no progress. One savage distrusts another, and so they all remain savages. When a savage or semi-savage chief visits a civilized country, the most wondrous thing which he beholds is this faith reposed by one man in another. He sees men freely trusting their property, their persons, their lives to one another without fear, and that is a far more wonderful thing than great ships, great cities and great kingdoms.

If we consider the agricultural life of man we see that it must be largely a life of faith. The germination of the seed, the nourishment of the soil, the orderly procession of the seasons, summer and winter, cold and heat, and seed-time and harvest, wind and shower and sunshine—these are mainly matters of faith. We have no assurance of them but the assurance of faith. We speak of the stability of the order of nature, but that stability is simply a matter of faith. The fact that things have gone on in a certain way in the past is itself no guarantee that they will continue in the same course for the future. We believe that the sun will rise to-morrow because it rose to-day, but we do not and cannot know it. Our conviction of the uniformity of nature is a matter of belief, not of knowledge. And all that rests on that conviction

rests on a foundation of faith and not a direct perception of the senses. He that sows and he that reaps, he that plants and he that waters, both walk by faith and not by sight.

Our commercial life goes on in the same way. Mutual faith between man and man is its bond and basis. If you could destroy all our highways, and burn all the ships in our harbors, and cut off all means of communication between nations, you would not so effectually destroy commerce as if you could sow the seeds of distrust and unbelief among the various nations of the world. Without faith your ships would rot at the docks, your engines would rust in the round-house, and your great marts of trade would become a wilderness and a solitude. We speak of certain laws of trade and say, if men can conform to them they may hope for success. But the fundamental law of trade, that in which all the other laws have their roots, is this confidence of one man in another and of every man in his kind. Dig up that and the whole structure comes down with a crash. I need not carry the illustration further. Faith is the most omnipresent and indispensable element in human life.

Now what we next remark in this faith is the difficulty of defining it perfectly. Whether we take the word as it occurs in our common life, or as it occurs in the Scriptures, no definition which we can give of it appears to exhaust its meaning in

every case. All translators of the Holy Scriptures, without exception so far as I know, have felt this difficulty of definition, and have rendered the original term, sometimes by one word, sometimes by another—sometimes by belief, sometimes by trust, sometimes by assurance, sometimes by fidelity—and not unfrequently have been perplexed just what rendering to give it.

Let me submit two remarks on this difficulty of exact definition of words:

1. It is very easy to exaggerate the importance of such definition. The understanding of faith has very little to do with the exercise of faith; just as the understanding of the phenomenon of vision has nothing to do with the exercise of the sense of sight. We learn, on consulting the science of optics, that vision is not an immediate perception of the object, but a perception of the image or picture of the object which is reflected on the retina of the eye. That is, you do not see me as I am speaking to you, but only a very diminutive picture of me which is mirrored in the organ of vision. All you can see of me is in your eye. And yet you do not see me any better because I have defined to you the nature of sight. You exercise the organ just as well when you don't understand all the process that such exercise involves. So, if we were to study the lid of the eye, we should see that it is marvelously adapted for the defense and protection of the delicate visual organ. But we do

not need to understand that in order to close the eyelid on the very instant that the eye is assailed. The bird, which understands nothing of the philosophy of vision, makes use of its eyelid as freely as the oculist who has perfect comprehension of it all. The same thing may be said of digestion. One does not need to understand its processes in order to perform them. I lived a good many of the happiest years of my life, and, except for an occasional repast of green apples, should never have known that I had a digestion. Certainly I have not had a better digestion since I have learned something of its laws. A good digestion does not depend on a man's ability to understand or explain it. Neither does a living and saving faith depend upon the believer's ability to define its meaning with absolute accuracy. This is why strict definition is so rare in Scripture.

2. Now let us remark, in the second place, the reasons of this difficulty of defining faith. (1) In the first place, human language is incapable of defining thought with absolute accuracy. A word is not the same unchanging symbol as a figure in the multiplication table. We take the figure four and it always has a definite and unchanging significance. Like a pint-cup, it holds so much, and you can put no more in it. So any other digit. But that is not so of a word. We cannot say that it contains just so much meaning in every case and can contain no more. It may contain more or less

according to the connection. Thus the word "man"—how much that word may mean or how little! And whether much or little depends upon its connection. A man may be a mere biped, a two-legged animal, more beastly in his appetites and more ferocious and brutal in his disposition than other animals, differing from them more in form than in fact; or he may be a son of God, who reflects his Father's image and imitates his character. And whether the word means this or that, we must determine by the connection in which it occurs. Now faith may be the act of an angel or a devil; for the devils believe and tremble. And we must look to the context to see whether the faith described is divine or diabolical. Certainly we should not submit the word itself to a thumb-screw process in hope of extorting from it in every case an invariable meaning.

(2) Another reason of the difficulty of defining faith lies in its very nature. Faith is an act of the mind, and mind itself is, in its last analysis, a mystery. I spoke a little while ago about defining digestion, but every intelligent man must know that digestion has not been defined. We can state some of its laws and describe some of its processes, but the thing itself remains inscrutable. It is a vital process. The powers of digestion are living powers. And hence, to understand digestion, would be to understand life, which no man has been able to understand. In answer to the question, "What

is life?" all science is dumb. In like manner we cannot define sight, because we cannot understand it. We know something about it, that an image is made, that the mind perceives the image; but what is the nature of that act of perception, what is the subtle connection between the material image and the immaterial mind, we do not know that. And we shall never define vision until we are able to define mind. Just so, because faith is an act of the mind, it must partake somewhat of the mystery which belongs to the mind itself.

Let none of us refuse to believe, therefore, because we cannot define, in all its length and breadth and height and depth, the operation of faith. We may as reasonably refuse to think, because the process of thinking in some respects passes all our understanding. We may believe, to our eternal salvation, without being able to comprehend all that may be involved in the exercise of faith.

It is not a perfect definition of faith which is presented to us in this text, when we are told that faith is "the foundation of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen." It is simply the presentation of one of the aspects of faith, faith in its relation to the future, faith as the ground of hope. Had it been the purpose of the apostle to describe the relation of faith to the truth, he would not have called it a foundation, but a superstructure. Faith rests on truth; hope rests on faith. All

the examples cited in this context illustrate this aspect of faith—faith as the foundation of hope. Abel had only a hope of righteousness, of acceptance, when he brought the firstlings of his flock to the altar. The foundation of that hope was faith in the mercy of God. Noah, in building the ark, had only a hope of deliverance from the flood. Abraham, in leaving Mesopotamia, had only a hope of Canaan. In each case the hope rested on faith in the promise of God; and in each case the hope was realized, and passed out of anticipation into experience.

Let me urge, then, for the rest of this sermon, two points: (1) The great practical and indispensable value of hope as an element in Christian life; and (2) the great need of faith as the foundation of hope.

1. I think that one of the texts which we ought to engrave on our memories and meditate in our hearts, is those words of Paul in the eighth chapter of Romans—"We are saved by hope." In church life, in Christian life, in all life, that is a capital truth. It is the hopeful spirit that wins. That is demonstrated in all directions. If you consult the statistics of commerce, you will find that the very first condition of success is the well-grounded hope of success. Not business talent, not frugality and industry, not propitious circumstances, but before all these, it is the hope of victory, which makes the whole manner of the man

confident and assuring. It is so in raising a family. If parents are hopeful of a prosperous future for their children, if, instead of predicting that they will be in the poor-house or the penitentiary before they are of age, they reckon on the success of their children, and speak to them in the language of encouragement and enthusiasm, then they are most likely to succeed in that most difficult task which God has given to man—to train up a child in the way he should go. There are cases recorded where men have been on the very verge of failure, and have been saved by the revival of hope. A certain banker tells it of himself, that in the great panic of '73, he had given over all hope of surviving the shock and strain of those dread months, and was calmly waiting his failure, as a foregone conclusion. Chancing to be in New York city, he followed the crowd to hear one of the great preachers of the metropolis. The preacher's theme was, "The Duty of Hopefulness," which he urged so earnestly and so cunningly, that the banker found himself looking at the bright side of his case, and came forth from that sanctuary as one who had drunk afresh of the waters of life. He returned to his distant home, resolved to be hopeful. He determined to look, chiefly at least, at the favorable signs. His whole manner changed. He began to go back to his work with his old-time heartiness and cheer. His employes and associates saw the change, and caught some of his confidence. And

the bank was saved. That man declares to this day that this sermon on Hope was worth more to him and his depositors than a deposit of a hundred thousand dollars. We should think it a great gain to this church if to-day we might see some one come among us who would bring with him a half-million or a million of dollars which he solemnly and publicly promised to use as a steward of the Lord. But it will be a ten-fold greater gain if we can inspire our hearts with a confident and jubilant hope. We are saved, not by wealth, not by numbers, not by intelligence—"We are saved by hope." It is not the gifted preacher who succeeds, nor the mediocre man who fails. He fails who preaches the gospel of despair, however eloquently; and he succeeds who preaches the gospel of hope, however plainly. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God. For I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God." He who sings that song of hope in the desert shall surely sing the song of triumph in the city of God.

2. And now a few words to the other point: Faith is the root and the spring of hope. If you want to have hope, you must have faith. You can have no hope of a man till you have faith in him. I once visited a man who had been put in jail at the instance of his wife. He was so abusive and violent in his hours of inebriation that it was perilous to have him in the house. When I visited

him, he professed deep penitence and an earnest desire to be reconciled to his wife, beseeching me to intercede for him. But she was obdurate. She had no hope of his reformation, because she had no faith in him. How could she have hope when she had no confidence in him? I could not dispute that reasoning. Faith is always the foundation of hope. "Then," said I, "you think your husband is totally depraved; there is nothing in him in which you can put any dependence; his whole nature is just like a tree—dead and rotten, root and branch; whatever limb you lay hold on, breaks as you put your weight on it?" This was almost too much for her. "Not quite so bad as that," she said, coloring and resenting my words somewhat. "He has one good thing about him; he is truthful. When he has been drinking, he does not deny it; when he has spent my money for liquor, he don't disown it when I charge him with it. He never deceived me." "Well," I returned, "there is something on which your faith can build, and on which hope can rest. A man that tells the truth is not past all hope of reformation. And more than that, remember that your hope of your husband's reformation does not rest on your faith in him alone; but he professes also to believe in God, and to have turned to him in repentance. When you have faith in him, and both have faith in God, who has said, 'He that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out,' that surely is a faith broad enough on

which to build a blessed hope of reformation and a new life." I wish I could tell you that the sequel of this justified my words, but those two have long since disappeared from my knowledge; whether they have continued steadfast or drawn back to perdition, I know not.

But of this we may be sure: Jesus Christ is the world's only hope—the only hope of reformation from sin; the only hope of a true and worthy life; the only hope of redemption from the grave and immortal blessedness beyond. This is the strong consolation of those "who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us, which hope we have as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters into that within the veil."

III.

THE GLORY OF CHRIST.

This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed on him.—JOHN 2: 11.

WHAT is this glory of Christ, which here at Cana he begins to manifest? Or, to get at the answer to this question in a larger way, What is the significance of the word *glory* in general? We should say first, perhaps, that which is bright or shining, as the glory of the sun, the glory of the moon, the glory of the stars; and one star differs from another star in glory. But what makes the sun, the moon and the stars to shine, and to shine with differing glory? Our Heavenly Father makes his sun to shine on the evil and the good. They shine, because it is their nature to shine. They were created for this purpose. Glory, then, has respect to essential nature. The glory of a thing is that which constitutes its real nature, and without which it must cease to exist.

Thus the glory of our system is the sun. Take that away, and our system ceases to be. The glory of the sun is its power to shine. When it ceases to shine, it ceases to be a sun. So the moon or the star is moon or star no more, if it ceases to shine. Thus the glory of mankind is their reason.

Without this they become as irrational cattle. Thus, again, as the apostle teaches, the glory of a man is his strength. Bodily strength enters into our idea of manhood, or it should. Intellectual and moral strength, energy, boldness, power of aggression or resistance—these are the glory of a man, because they make up his essential nature. Without them a man is not a man. So the glory of a woman is her modesty—the hair is the covering and sign of modesty is the apostle's meaning—and those other virtues and graces—delicacy, meekness, patience, kindness and faith—which really go to make up modesty—these are woman's ornament and glory; and to the extent that she lays aside these and becomes masculine in her ambition and attainments she unsexes herself, ceases so far to be a woman, and loses the glory, because she has lost the essential nature and character of her sex.

Now this, I take it, is what the apostle means when he tells us that Christ manifested his glory in this miracle at Cana; he flashed forth what was his true nature and real character. Then it appeared, for the first time, that he was not what he appeared in the eyes of men to be—a mere man as other men. But his Messianic majesty shone forth in this miracle, so that the disciples were able to discern in him more clearly than ever before the long-expected Messiah and deliverer of the world.

The glory of Christ is the essential being of

Christ, that which distinguishes him from every other being, that without which there could be no Christ.

This glory, as here manifest, consists in two things, a glory of being—or, speaking less correctly, of nature—and a glory of character. Let me make this distinction between being and character stand out by illustration: You say of a certain moving object, which you descry—it may be in the midst of the waters, appearing as a mere piece of drift in the midst of the furious waves—"It is a man." In that statement you assert being or nature. You mean it is not a marine or a land animal, nor is it a piece of drift-wood, but it is a human being, a man. But if by further use of your eyes or your glass you discover that this man is trying to rescue another, and that with great courage and skill, and at great peril of his life he is steadily drawing the other to a place of safety, then you exclaim, "Brave man, good man, noble man!" That is, you assert character. You not only see a human being, but one of noble character.

This miracle showed the eternal, uncreated being of Christ. This is not the beginning of his divine being. It was not that he was christed or clothed upon with this nature now, or recently. This was the beginning of his miracles, but he himself had no beginning. He was in the beginning. The miracle was the manifestation of his glory. It was as if the sun was enswathed in a sphere of thick

cloud through which it now and then made a rift and flashed forth or manifested its glory. The glory did not begin with the manifestation. It began with the sun. It was here at Cana that there shone forth for the first time that manifest glory of Christ which in so many and so great miracles was revealed throughout his ministry, and in the contemplation of which the disciples were brought to confess, in the words of Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." It was the beginning of that self-revelation of Christ, which was continued in many mighty works, and consummated in his resurrection and ascension into glory. The apostle, looking back through all that long vista of signs and miracles, whose purpose he now so well understood, declares that it opened at Cana of Galilee. There Christ's true and eternal glory began to appear. And this is why we rest our case on Christ with so much confidence. He is God manifest in the flesh, and is, therefore, able to save unto the uttermost all those that come unto God by him. In him is the strength of the eternal God.

But here is manifest, not only the glory of Christ's eternal being, but also his eternal and divine character. He is the manifestation not only of eternal existence, but eternal wisdom and grace.

Observe, for example, his divine patience. He had been before conscious—I cannot say how long—of his divine being and power. He

knows the glory which belongs to him, but he knows also that the hour to manifest it has not yet come, and he is content to wait. Therein he reveals the patience and long-suffering of God. God has gone on in his work with a kind of infinite leisure and self-control. Six days were taken to create the world, which might have been spoken into existence and order in a moment, and each day, we have come to believe, was an age. So God has been patient with man. How long he bore with the perverse and rebellious ways of Israel! How he bears with the selfish and godless ways of this present age! But in due time he will manifest both his power and his glory. Christ manifests the patience of God. He knows how to wait until his hour is come. Ambitious men push themselves into publicity and power before they are ready for it, and with a passionate haste, rush to an untimely work. The result is always failure. Blessed is he who can bide his time, and wait till his hour comes; for he partakes of the divine nature.

Now, what is the secret of this impatience and hurry to bring one's powers into prominence? Is it not vanity and pride? It is not so much the desire to bless men by a beneficent and kindly use of their gifts, as to use those gifts for their own honor and aggrandizement. Like Samson, they are conscious of great powers, and like him, instead of using them on proper occasions and to

worthy ends, and after patient discipline, they use them rashly and frivolously, and to their own destruction. This beginning of Christ's miracles suggests the patience of Christ in not beginning his miracles until his hour had come.

Christ here manifests also the glory of the divine sympathy with men, not only in their sorrows, but in their joys and festivities.

So far the revelation which God had made to men was necessarily a one-sided and imperfect revelation. God had manifested in the law and in the prophets, and even in the ministry of John the Baptist, his divine holiness and hatred of sin. His servants had separated themselves from the world as from a thing wholly polluted and unclean. John the Baptist, the last of his messengers, had held himself aloof from men. He made his home and performed his ministry in the wilderness, compelling such as would hear his message to leave the haunts of men and come out into the desert. Now all this is necessary. Sin is the abominable thing which God hates, and men must know this, and renounce all fellowship with it. For all it is only one side of God's character, the darker side. Christ is come to manifest the glory, not only of divine holiness, but of divine love. He does not dwell apart from men; he mingles with the common lot and common life of men. He eats and drinks with them and keeps their continual company.

We have made much of the sympathy of Christ; but it is of sympathy with our sorrows rather than our joys. We know he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and in time of temptation and distress we easily turn to him for comfort. We do not so easily turn to him for sympathy in our joys, unless, indeed, they be what we call spiritual joys, that is, joys connected entirely with the spiritual victory over the flesh. As to our common joys, we suppose that he takes no interest in them other than to tolerate them as something wholly of the earth earthy, or else to look on them all with a cold eye of disapproval.

Remember, then, that Jesus began his ministry at a marriage, not at a funeral. The joys and festivities of that occasion were matters to which he was neither hostile nor indifferent. Let us put the scene before us for a moment. The custom was such as this: The center of festivity is at the house of the bridegroom or his father, as the case may be. The bride and groom spend the day separately in confession of sin, and the observance of certain religious rites. As evening comes on the friends and relatives of the bride lead her forth in her bridal array and with garlands of flowers to the bridegroom's house. Torches or lamps precede the company. Music breaks forth on every side—music from the band of musicians who have been provided for the occasion, and songs from the virgins who stand along the

streets to yield honors to the bride. As the bridal party draws near, the bridegroom comes forth to meet them, when a solemn ceremony commemorates the union, and the wedding feast, to last three days, or more usually seven, begins, through all of which joy and merriment prevail. Christ stood in the midst of all this, for what purpose? Not to bear witness against it, not to frown upon it, but to sanction it and make it the occasion of the opening of his joyful ministry. The joy of the bride and the bridegroom, the joy of the friends and relatives, the joy of the happy guests—he enters into all and sympathizes with all. And when that joy was about to be cut short by the failure of the supply of wine, he, mindful of the embarrassment and disgrace which it must bring to the host, and also of the discomfort and scandal it must create, interposes to supply the deficiency by his miracle of turning water into wine. Wine had not then, as it has now, become so generally associated with excess and riot that he might not do that with propriety. The light wines of Palestine are said to be hardly more stimulating than coffee. This miracle lends no aid to those who abuse the gifts of God, either by using them to excess, or using them in any wise when their use confirms others in the power of an evil habit. The general and habitual use of wine in our age would certainly lead to results which did not follow its use in the days of Christ. And so

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we abstain from it, not as from something sinful in itself, but which has become a stumbling-block to the sobriety of others. And, no doubt, if Christ were on earth now, performing his mighty works, the same desire for the welfare and happiness of men which made him turn water into wine, would now make him turn wine into water. So long as wine is a blessing rather than a bane, he would turn water into wine; but when the blessing is turned into a curse, he would turn the curse back into a blessing by changing the wine back into water. In all this let us be sure of one thing, Christ's unchanging sympathy with men, both in their sorrows and in their joys. He is our Friend no less at the festivities and rejoicings of the marriage than in the solemnities and lamentations of the funeral. The church is not, or it should not be, a funeral procession. It may be more fitly described as a bride going forth in joyous anticipation to meet the bridegroom.

And this is a part, an essential part, of the glory of Christ, his sympathy with the whole life of men. He sanctifies our sorrows and increases and ennobles our joys. He dignifies all our duties and lightens all our burdens. There is not a worthy impulse that springs up in our hearts, but that he knows it altogether, and shares it to the utmost. This is the surpassing glory of Christ's sympathy, that it compasses our whole nature, taking in every grief and every gladness.

This, then, is the glory of Christ: his glorious being and glorious character. He is the visible image of the invisible God; he is God made manifest in the flesh; he works in the divine power and majesty. And yet his omnipotence is swayed by his love. He is full of sympathy for men's joys and compassion for their griefs. He is able to save all, and to save them to the uttermost.

When the disciples beheld that glory they believed on him, more confidently, more implicitly than before, and so became more his disciples. They saw how worthy he was to be their Master, and they followed him with greater fidelity.

What they saw is now, by the gospel, declared to us all, and declared more fully than they then perceived. Through faith we all may behold the the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ. That glory which began to be manifest at Cana now shines forth before our eyes. The gospel of Christ is the manifestation of the truth—it is the shining forth of this great truth, Christ is able and willing to save, and as such it commends itself to every man's conscience in the sight of God. We may refuse to behold this glory through unbelief or disobedience. This glory may be to some of you a hidden glory. But hear the words of the apostle: "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving,

that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not dawn upon them." Let not the evil one blindfold us and lead us away from the glory of God into utter and everlasting darkness.

IV.

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE DISCIPLES.

"Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment."—1 COR. 1: 10.

I DESIRE to state to-day, as compactly and clearly as possible, the leading principles of the work in which we, the religious people now generally known as Disciples, are engaged. I state these principles not only for the benefit of such persons here to-day as may stand apart from this work, are more or less strangers to it, that they may desire a fuller knowledge of it, but especially also for the benefit of ourselves. There are many young people in our churches who have not had the same reason and opportunity to get acquainted with these principles as their parents had, and whose conception of it must needs be more or less vague and fragmentary. There are many people also who have been drawn to us not so much by our peculiar plea as by other worthy and excellent reasons. And I am afraid, also, that there are others who think they understand these principles, and are swift to condemn all who differ from them as recreant to the principles of this reformation, but who, in spite of all, have mistaken them,

and are themselves the unconscious enemies of reformation.

These principles, I maintain, whether we consent to them or not, are not hard to be understood. In the first place, there is no authorized statement of them. They have never been gathered into a creed and sent forth with the seal and authority of those who propounded them or of the body of those who accept them. Neither is there a set of men appointed guardians and oracles of these principles, so that their statement of them is final and beyond appeal. There be some who essay this office, but they do it without authority, and their expositions of our principles are entitled to no more weight or warrant than any other man's, that is, to only so much as the reason and facts in the case allow.

Now this might seem, at first view, to make it difficult to understand the principles of our work. Authorized statements are supposed to give clearness and finality to the principles which they embody. But, in the first place, there will always be a conflict of authority. If one man can claim to make an authorized statement, another may as well make the same claim; and if the statements of these two men differ, then not clearness, but confusion, is the result. And as a matter of fact and of history, the authoritative statement of principles has not ended all controversy concerning them, but has rather aggravated controversy. There

would hardly be so much difference of opinion as to the fundamental principles of Christianity if creed-makers and councils had not taken it upon themselves to put forth authoritative statements of what these principles are. Statements of these principles are right and necessary, but no man has the right to set upon those statements the seal of authority, and say that difference from them in any particular is heresy. This is to bring the principle into controversy and thence into obscurity.

Neither are these principles a matter of philosophy. All questions of mere philosophy are more or less difficult of understanding. But a man may hold to the principles of the Disciples and know nothing of philosophy or theology. They are principles of practical, not of speculative thought. It was not the design of the reformation to propound a new philosophy or new theology, but to emphasize certain things which are obvious to the common mind and applicable to common life.

The principles of our reformation are a matter of history. They may be judged by the general impression which they have made on the mind of the age and by the results they have wrought in the world. After all, the great expounder of principles is history. A man's principles are not always what this or that man, friend or enemy, may say they are; not altogether what he says they are; but what they are shown to be in their

historic development. The principles of the Disciples are a matter of history; and we all may turn to that and judge for ourselves. And if we would turn to this history instead of blindly scoffing the expositions of this or that man, we should soon be delivered of all serious misapprehension concerning them and of the differences and contentions to which these misapprehensions give rise.

The witness of history to the principles of the Disciples is, first of all, this: that all the principles of the Disciples originated in this simple conviction, that the division of the church into sects is an evil and a sin. I can not stop to tell you how gradually the fathers of this reformation came to this conclusion; how they concluded first that sectarianism was a sin; that bigotry, intolerance, envy among the various sects, was a sin, and how some of them labored to promote more friendly and amicable relations among the denominations. It is enough to know that their labors in that direction, while most acceptable to the best people in every sect, really stirred up the spirit of persecution against them and seemed, on the whole, to increase rather than to abate the bitterness and intolerance of sectarianism.

From this conviction of the evil of the sectarian spirit they advanced another step. They came to believe that the division of the church into many denominations was an evil. They did not yet

hold that all denominational divisions were wrong. They thought only that there were too many of them. Thomas Campbell therefore did his first work for Christian union within his own denomination. He was a Scotch Presbyterian. And the Presbyterian Church of Scotland was divided then, as it is to a little less extent yet, into a multitude of smaller sects, each more or less hostile to every other. His first endeavor, both while in the old country and after he came to America, was to unite the many feeble and scattered flocks of his sect into one fold. There was a similar effort at unity within the other great denominations, going on at the same time. These endeavors to unite those who wore the same general name and acknowledged the same general standards of doctrine, were, on the whole, fruitless.

At last those men came, as by a sudden step, to the broad ground that all division and all denominationalism is wrong. Not only should there be no divisions within denominational lines, but these lines themselves cut right through the law of Christ, and should be removed. Then came the tug of war. There were multitudes who united with them to deplore the sectarian spirit; there were many also who were convinced with them of the evil of so many sects and so many divisions within the great sects; but when they advanced one step further, and proclaimed all division and every denomination a sin before God and a stumb-

ling-block to the world, they found themselves a small company arrayed against the whole religious world. It was in this conviction that denominationalism itself is an evil, and with this watch-word, "Let there be no divisions among you," that the reformation began, and here is the fountain of all its principles.

Now let us have this position of the Disciples stated fully, because it is much misunderstood both by friends and foes. In the first place, you observe, then, that sweeping and radical as their position was and is, it was by no means a wholesale and indiscriminate condemnation of existing Christianity in all respects. It was a condemnation of its divisions and of everything which carried in it the seeds of division. These reformers, who were neither bigots nor simpletons, who were men of heart and brain, did not account the church as a thing extinct. They did not say that after eighteen hundred years Christianity was a failure, and that the sects are all utterly without Christ and without hope. They would have counted it blasphemy to say that they and their little following constituted the church, and that all the rest of the religious world was lost. They did not once dream that in any future time, and far less within less than twenty years after they were dead, men would rise up and declare in their name, that they and their followers were the true church, and that all the rest of mankind were in the gall of bitter-

ness and the bond of iniquity. They did often scorn such an imputation; and one of them, the greatest and most illustrious of them all, defined a Christian to be "one who believes that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, and obeys him in all things, according to the measure of his knowledge of his will." If a man must believe that there are no true Christians outside of that body of people to which he belongs, let him believe it. But let him not suppose that this horrible belief is any part of the principles of the Disciples. They have repudiated it from the first, and their plea and work had their origin in the conviction that there are thousands and thousands of Christians in all denominations who should not be divided by any party lines, and whom they have set out to make one. There may be those among us who suppose that the Disciples, and they alone, are the true church and people of God, but though among us they are not of us, and sooner or later they must either change or go out from us. They have missed the meaning of this movement. They need to review its history from the beginning.

They will see then that the men who began this reformation did not intend a separate movement. They were not seceders. They did not draw out of their own accord from the sects to which they belonged. They were driven out. They hoped to reform the church of its divisions without forming another sect. They desired to remain within the

denomination and reform it from within. They only withdrew when they were given to understand that they must either cease to denounce division and urge union, or get out from the sect in which they were. They were compelled to choose between stifling their convictions in an ignoble silence and coming out from those who justified division. So their separate existence was not a matter of preference, but of necessity. They did not leave the denominations because they thought them so far reprobate and apostate as to have lost all right and claim to be called Christian, and therefore unworthy of their company. They left them because they could not be suffered to maintain their convictions among them.

The first principle of the Disciples, in order of time, if not in order of importance, is the essential and visible unity of the church, and the consequent evil of dividing the church into denominations. The evil of denominationalism is a cardinal principle among us. One who doubts or disbelieves that, must feel his sympathy with us weakening. If I thought the division of Christians into sects a good and desirable thing, the normal and natural condition of the church, I should never preach for you again. I should go among those who justify these divisions. But I believe with all my heart that denominationalism is an evil which ought to be destroyed. I believe it is a violation of God's Word, a necessary narrowing and dwarf-

ing of the faith, the sympathies, and the character of the church, and an offense and scandal to the unbelieving world. And I feel myself bound by every law of truth and conscience and sound reason to oppose it, however little that opposition may seem to effect. Paul said to the church in Corinth, not to the church on this or that street in Corinth, but to the whole church, that is to say, to all the Christians in that great city, "Let there be no divisions among you." And the same reasons for the union of all Christians in Corinth, hold good for the union of Christians in every place throughout the world.

Are there any signs of the disappearance of divisions in the church and its practical and visible unity before the world? The signs are not so hopeful as they may at first appear. There is indeed a sentiment in favor of union which makes itself manifest in many ways. But so far this sentiment remains a sentiment. It takes on no practical form. It evaporates in fine speech. It comes to nothing definite. And even this sentiment is confined to a few of the leaders of the church. The great multitude of preachers are either indifferent or hostile to any practical union of the church. Most of them still justify denominationalism as a divine arrangement, a device of God's providence for the better accomplishment of his work. The most discouraging aspect of the question lies in this opposition of the pulpit to

the unity of the church. This opposition is not very rational. It is not even plausible. But it is outspoken and determined.

There are, on the other hand, signs of hope. Whatever may be the feeling of the pulpit, the feeling of the pews is towards unity. As is so generally true in matters of religion, the people are in advance of their leaders. The average layman does not know the difference between his church and the church of his neighbor. And when he knows it he does not regard it of any consequence. The people, by a large majority, would be ready for some practical unity to-day, if the preachers were ready.

Then, there are certain changes going on in the church which all tend towards the church's union. The theology of the church is changing. It is, for one thing, more irenic, that is, more peaceful. Polemics are less in fashion. Belligerency has lost its power. Men still discuss their differences, but they do it in a better spirit and with a better motive. In the second place, theology is more exegetical and scriptural and less biased by philosophy and speculation. The modern commentaries show far less of theological and sectarian bias than the older ones, and are far more loyal to the letter as well as the spirit of Scripture. Then, theology is centering more and more about Christ. The different and opposing theologies contend about points of doctrine. Calvinism revolves

about the sovereignty of God; Arminianism about the free agency of man; Universalism about God's mercy, and Unitarianism about his unity. All these are truths, but not one of them is the central and supreme truth of the Christian revelation. Christ is the central truth of the gospel, and modern theology is centering about Christ. So there are changes taking place in the polity or government of the church, and especially in the work of the church, which all tend towards the church's final unity. It is marvelous to me that any one who can discern the signs of the times can fail to see that they point with more or less clearness and certainty to the fulfillment of our Lord's last prayer for his people, that they all might be one, . . . that so the world might believe that the Father had sent him. This on-coming union of Christ's church may be nearer, or it may be farther, than we think. It is not for us to sit down and speculate as to the time or the manner of its coming, but to work for it and pray for it. God seldom gives to one people or one generation to achieve so great a work, lest they become vain of the achievement. But every one of us may bear part in that work and bring its completion nearer. Every one of us may do something to fulfill our Lord's prayer for the unity of his disciples. Every one who confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord, and believes in his heart that God has raised him from the dead, and, casting aside all the creeds

and commandments of men, renouncing all parties and sects, cleaves only unto Christ as his Savior and his Master, to be trusted in every promise and obeyed in every command, helps to bring in that blessed day when we shall keep the unity of the faith in the bond of peace ; when there will be, as at the beginning, one body, or church, with one spirit, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all.

V.

THE PRINCIPLES OF THE DISCIPLES.

"I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."—*EPH. 4: 1, 2.*

THE present divisions among Christians are a manifest wrong to almost every one who has no interest in preserving them. Whether they are judged in the light of the Scriptures, which everywhere teach the unity of the church, or from their effects on the unbelieving world, the separation of the church into sects appears an almost unmitigated evil. But they are, for all that, justified by many as a necessary evil. Necessary, some think, because the union of all sects into one would form a religious despotism, perilous to the liberties and the highest interests of mankind. The church, it is thought, is not yet ready to be trusted with the power which would come of its union, and so it is necessary to distribute and divide its power among many sects, rather than to concentrate it into one great body. And though this division is necessarily productive of many evils, they are, on the whole, less than would come if the same power was wielded by one great organization. Thus, the argument runs, if the Roman Catholic Church were

divided, the rights and liberties of men would be safer than they are now in the presence of that united and powerful hierarchy. Then to unite Protestantism, as Romanism is united, would be to give us two religious despotisms in place of one, and so double the dangers of such despotism.

It does not lie in my way to consider this argument at length. It is enough to say that the power of all despotism is the power of error. Thus, political despotism is perpetuated through the error that it is the divine right of some men to rule over others. Religious despotism has the same sort of foundation. And when we put two errors together, or unite two religious bodies whose fundamental principle is error, this is, of course, to increase the power of error and to make despotism more despotic. But Christian union is not a union of error or in error. It is the casting out of error and uniting men in the truth. And a union founded in truth can never become despotic. Power whose source is truth can never be abused. Thus the apostolic church was a united church, and yet it made not the faintest approach to despotism, because the bond and basis of its union was the truth as it is in Jesus. And it was only when the church was moved away from this foundation-truth, and began to establish itself in error, that its union began to work evil in the world, and its power became despotic. That is, only when it ceased to be the true church, and maintained only

its name of church, did it become a despotism. It may be admitted that a union of sects, with all their errors, would be a calamity; but such a union is not Christian union. The objections which justly lie against it are of no force against the union for which we seek.

There are others, again, who hold that the present divisions in the church are a necessary evil, not because their healing at the present time would result in greater evils, but because this healing is at present impossible. We can find no basis of union on which all Christians will consent to stand. And, so desirable as union may appear, it is as yet manifestly impossible. That brings us to what I call the second principle of the Disciples, the peculiar basis on which we propose to unite the church. How, then, have others proposed to unite the church? let us ask, that we may make our principle stand out more clearly.

Some have proposed to build up one great sect, which should overshadow and swallow up all others, until itself should be the sole claimant to the church's name remaining. This is the Roman plan—to arrogate to itself the claim to be the true and only church, to make no concessions, to grant no truce, but steadfastly press its claims until they shall be acknowledged by all men. This Romish method is imitated more or less by all sects. Each asserts its claim to be the best church, if not the only true church, and each fondly hopes that

in time all others will yield the field in its favor. It was never the purpose of the men who began our reformation to found a new sect. Their separate existence was forced upon them against their will. And it will be a very sad thing for us, if our efforts are diverted from their original aim to the work of building up another sect, which we fondly hope may at length overshadow all the rest.

Then, there is the hope of uniting the church by bringing all Christians to accept a common standard of doctrine. It seems a singular irony of history that all the great creeds, which have proved so divisive and schismatic, which have been as wedges to cleave the church into pieces, and walls to keep it divided, should have been designed by those who constructed them to bind the church into closer union. Yet such is the fact. Each creed was called forth by the divisions which prevailed among professing Christians, and each was an honest though mistaken endeavor after unity.

Even among those who hope for a creed-union, there is much difference of opinion. Some would have us take that creed which is most in harmony with the Scriptures, as if every man did not put in that claim for his creed and enforce it by a plausible array of proof-texts. Others propose the most popular creed, that which has been most widely accepted in the religious world, as if this was a question to be settled by a simple counting of noses, as if majorities were always right. Still

others propose a compromise creed, in which the leading points of all the creeds shall be harmonized and preserved, as if the church could ever be held together by the policy of compromise. Then it is still further urged that we should go back in the past for our creed, to the time when the church was yet undivided, and uttered its faith with one voice. But it is not agreed how far back we should go. Should we go back to Calvin, or to Luther, or beyond these to Wicklife, or beyond him to Augustine? Or should we go back to the first council of the church, when representatives from all parts of Christendom gathered in the city of Nice, in Bythinia, in the year 325, and took upon them to declare the faith of the universal church? Let us take the utterances of that great and venerable council, say some, and unite on them. Others, yet, propose a simpler, if not an older, basis of union, namely, what is miscalled the Apostles' Creed, with which, I suppose, most of us are familiar. We see, then, there is no want of variety in the proposed plans of union, and the most judicious might find it difficult to decide among them.

Now the Disciples propound a basis different from all these. They agree with those who say that we should go back to the past for our ground of union. These are on the right track, but they don't go far enough. We propose to go back beyond Nice to Jerusalem. We propose to go beyond the so-called and spurious Apostles' Creed, to the

real and proper creed of the apostles. That is, we propose to unite the church by restoring to its proper place and authority the teaching of the apostles, as that is recorded for us in the New Testament, and make that our ground of union. We reason thus: the church was united once; if we can find the bond by which it was united, and restore that to the church, and cast out from among us all that may not be included in that bond, then may we see the church one in our day as it was in the days of the apostles. The principle of the Disciples is the restoration of the primitive and apostolic faith to the church, as the only and all-sufficient bond of union. I am not so much concerned now to justify that principle as to show you what it is and how it differs from all others. For it appears to me that its simple statement is its justification. To state it is to vindicate it.

Regard to this leading principle of our movement, the restoration of the apostolic teaching to its place in the church, will explain many things which excite surprise and sometimes provoke the disapproval of the religious world.

First, we find here explanation of that spirit of discussion which was so characteristic of us at the first, and has not yet wholly departed from us. Not only have we debated with our neighbors as we had opportunity, but we have had no small disputation among ourselves almost from the beginning of our work. The main purpose of this

discussion has been to find out what is the apostolic teaching, that we may restore it. It has proceeded from the endeavor to discriminate between what is incidental and what is essential in the apostolic teaching. For example, the apostles exhorted some to whom they wrote to greet one another with the holy kiss; and again, the duty of the saints to wash one another's feet is enjoined. And we know there are sects yet remaining who practice these as apostolic ordinances, though the great majority of Christians think these are but temporary and local applications of the obligations of Christian hospitality and fraternity. There were other things enjoined and practiced by the apostles which were peculiar to their age and civilization, and when we propose to restore apostolic teaching to the church we are called upon at once to distinguish between the transient and the permanent elements in the work of the apostles. And that is a distinction which can not be established without thorough and continued discussion. Let us not grow impatient with the discussion which our movement has engendered, but try to keep out of it all bitterness and all malice, and consider our differences as brethren.

We find in this principle of restoration the explanation of the various names which we bear, as Christians, or Disciples, when spoken of as individuals; and churches of Christ, or Christian churches, when spoken of as congregations. This

calling ourselves by the names originally applied to all Christ's people, instead of taking some denominational name, has appeared very uncharitable and offensive to many; for it seems to appropriate the Christian name to ourselves and deny it to others, when it belongs equally to all Christ's disciples. But we do not appropriate this name to ourselves and deny it to others. On the contrary, we plead with all who own the will and law of Christ to renounce all party names and wear their Lord's alone. And we enforce our plea by our example. We renounce all human names for the name of Christ. We are bound on principle to do this. We would restore to the church that worthy name by which the apostolic church was called. The world is largely ruled by names. If we could cast off our distinctive names our divisions would largely disappear. If we could restore the original names of the church, its original unity would be brought so far on its way. It may be impossible in the circumstances to escape a narrower use of the Christian name than the apostles made. But we should use it in as nearly the same sense as they used it as possible. We find in this idea of restoration of the apostolic teaching an explanation of the emphasis and prominence we have given to certain commandments of Christ, as the command to be baptized. Starting out with the object of restoring every ordinance of the Lord to the place which the apostles assigned it, as the

great principle of healing the church's divisions, we found baptism depreciated from its apostolic importance, on the one hand, and exalted above its measure, on the other. As to the act itself, we found that the original apostolic burial with Christ in baptism had been removed and something else substituted in its place. As to the significance, we found on one part it was esteemed a mere ceremony of very subordinate importance, and in no sense connected with salvation, and on the other part it had been made over into a regenerating ordinance, which, apart from repentance and faith in him who received it, became a means of grace to cleanse the soul from sin. It became the duty of the Disciples, if they were true to their principle of restoration, to discover and proclaim the true form and meaning of baptism; to show in the first place that it was the true and proper expression of the soul's renunciation of sin and its trust in Christ who commanded it, and without these antecedents of faith and repentance it is of no value, indeed, is no baptism at all; and in the second place, to show that, being commanded by Christ along with faith and repentance, it can not be lightly regarded without doing despite to his authority, and depriving ourselves of the promise of his forgiveness. We do not seek to make a hobby of baptism, or certainly we should not do so. But the union of the church can never come until every plant which the heavenly Father has

not planted shall be rooted from its place in the faith of the church, and every plant in the original system of faith which ignorant or presumptuous hands have rooted up shall be set in its place again.

Let us, above all things, keep in view the purpose for which we seek to restore to the church its original unity. It is in order, as our fathers were wont to say, to the speedy conversion of the world; or, as our Lord prayed, "that the world may believe that thou has sent me." Unbelief is the root of all sin and the source of all sorrow. It is the trail of the serpent that slimes and defiles the fairest flowers of human life. It is the greatest calamity that can befall the heart. To be destitute of wealth, of honor, of friends, to weep over the green graves of our loved ones, this is hard enough and sad enough. But sadder and harder beyond all compare is the lot of him who is destitute of faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God or serve man. It is the noblest of all works to promote faith in the hearts of men. Let us seek to make it as easy as possible for men to believe. Let us strive together in our mind, in our spirit, and in our body to make the faith of the gospel acceptable to all men. Then shall be brought to pass that vision of the seer from his island prison, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ; and he shall reign forever."

VI.

AGAINST CREEDS.

“And ye have made void the word of God because of your tradition.”—
MATT. 15: 6.

It is well understood by all who are acquainted with the movement for the reformation of the church and the restoration of the faith of the apostolic church, with which this church is historically associated, that it has, from the first day of its existence until now, been most outspoken and uncompromising in its opposition to human creeds as bonds of union and tests of fellowship among the followers of Christ. We have undoubtedly toned down in respect to some other things. We do not make the same indiscriminating warfare on a regular and settled ministry as was the custom of our fathers. While we recognize that their attacks were not without great provocation and fair semblance of reason, we have learned, as most of them learned, that a regular ministry of the gospel, and paid pastoral care of the churches, are indispensable to the life and growth of the church, and whatever may be their tendencies and perils, they can never work such harm to the churches as to leave them without such care. So likewise the leaders of this movement were inclined at first to commit themselves against missionary societies,

as both inexpedient and unlawful for the church's adoption. But we have gradually given over our opposition to them, and now use them as a necessary means of discharging the great commission which the Lord has left to his church. Not one person in twenty among us to-day regards the society issue as anything else than both a false issue and a dead issue. I have been in a position to speak on this subject from knowledge, and I declare to you that one in twenty is a very liberal allowance for those who think the society principle opposed to the word of God. I might speak of other things in which time and experience have wrought a change in our opinions and modified our views, but these suffice to make my point apparent.

One of the things in which, however, we all remain one, and continue as we began; in which we have not changed, have not let down in the least, have not modified, but rather intensified our convictions, is this, the inexpediency and unlawfulness of human creeds as bonds of union and terms of fellowship. Here we are all joined together in one mind and one judgment, and all speak the same thing.

I. Let me, then, in the first place, state plainly the *point* of our objection to creeds, that we may not be misunderstood or ranged on the side of the enemies of truth and of faith. What do we mean

by "creeds," when we avow our opposition to them?

1. We do not mean the same as *belief*. A man may have many beliefs, and these may be as deep as the fountains of his own life, and yet he may be a man without a creed, in the sense in which that word is meant in our usage of it. We make no war on beliefs; very far from it. On the contrary, one of our objections to the creeds is that they tend to promote unbelief instead of faith. We have no sympathy with the common practice of some loose and, as they love to be called, liberal thinkers, who set creed over against character and conduct, telling us in many specious phrases that it is of no consequence what a man believes, but what he is and what he does. We believe that both character and conduct must be grounded in faith, and that creed in this sense is as vitally related to deed as cause to effect, or means to end. Character is the solid framework of bone and tissue and muscle, and is the product of the food of truth taken into the moral system by faith. To say that it makes no difference what a man believes, is like saying it makes no difference what he eats. It does make a world of difference. The food must be such not only in name but in fact; it not only must have the form and appearance of food, but it must contain the elements of nutrition and stimulation. Truth is the nourishment of a man's soul, and there can be no character, and no con-

duct either, without it. The man who believes nothing will be nothing and do nothing. In denouncing creeds, therefore, we by no means denounce the duty of belief, nor yet the truth which those creeds may contain.

2. In opposing creeds we do not thereby oppose all statements of doctrine which may be made for the information of the public, whether those statements be drawn up by one or a number of persons. I have been told that as often as I propose any interpretation of any text, or even any view as to the meaning of any particular statement, I recite, in effect, an article of my creed. That is, to express a conviction or conclusion, in any matter of religion, is to propose a creed. Now, this is a strange and almost incredible misstatement, when we consider the respectability and intelligence of the people who make it. The creed is not what I believe. It is what I say you must believe or else I will have no fellowship with you. So long as I do not force it upon you, so long as I do not insist upon it as a term of communion between us it is not a creed, but only a conviction. It is when I seek to fasten this statement of my own upon you as a part of the divine word that it becomes a creed. So we may say of a church. This church might publish a statement of its convictions as touching any item of Christian truth and endorse it unanimously, and that would not make it a creed. If, for example, this sermon on

the unlawfulness of creeds should happen to give such satisfaction to this church that its publication was deemed desirable and by unanimous request and vote of the congregation I should consent to publish it, this would not be a creed of the church on the subject of creeds. The mere publication of our convictions does not make a creed. If this were the case there would be a veritable deluge of creeds. There would be as many creeds as there are books. Every sermon might be called a creed. Every utterance of one's faith in the hearing of others might then be regarded as the promulgation of a creed. Now every one knows that this is not what is meant when we speak generally of human creeds and represent them as evil in their results.

3. What, then, is a creed, in the sense in which we oppose it? Let me answer in the words of one who should be an authority in the matter, since, if he has not helped to make some of the creeds, he has written very ably in defense of them. Dr. Schaff thus defines a creed: "A form of words setting forth with authority certain articles of belief which are regarded by the framers as necessary for salvation, or at least for the welfare of the church." A creed, then, in the first place, assumes to be an *authoritative* document. It sets forth the articles which are affirmed by the church as necessary to salvation. When we inquire into the nature of this authority we find various ideas of its import.

Some regard this authority as simply the authority of the church expressed through its leaders and representatives, so that it is equivalent to saying : These are the articles which the church decides to be necessary to salvation and which she here announces and proclaims through her teachers in this form of words. Others would explain this authority as the authority of the church's teachers, to whom has been committed the office of interpreting the Scriptures, and who here proclaim, in virtue of this office, what is their true meaning and interpretation. A third class allege for the creed nothing less than the direct authority of God, claiming that the creed-makers were actually inspired for their work, and in framing the articles of the creed they spoke as holy men of God moved by the Holy Spirit. There are eminent Protestant divines who hold to this view of the authority of the creeds. It follows from this that a creed must be either directly or otherwise a term of communion and a test of fellowship. That is, no one can share the communion of the church or be publicly engaged in promoting its growth who does not accept the creed as an authorized interpretation of the divine truth. Thus, in the case of the publication of a sermon, as referred to already, we might all agree to its correctness as a statement of truth, but we do not propose it as a test of fellowship. We do not ask that every one who enters this church should

endorse either the doctrine or the statement of the sermon. We do not require even that our ministers shall adopt any such statement. We might unanimously endorse a statement in entire accord with the New Testament and recommend it to the consideration and acceptance of others, but we do not make its acceptance a condition of membership in the church, or even of gospel ministry. If any man of us were to attempt to do this, there are many of us who would spring up instantly to oppose it and would split the church into fragments sooner than see such a document bound upon it as a law, even though we all regarded it as a true and correct document, a sound statement of gospel truth. There would be no danger of a split, however, for we would as unanimously reject such a statement, when it was offered to us as a term of fellowship, as we would accept it, were it given out only as a statement of truth for public information. This, then, is the point of our objection to creeds. It is not that we object to clear and definite beliefs, nor that we oppose the statement of such beliefs in various ways for public information and instruction, nor that we charge the particular statements of the creeds as altogether untrue; but we object to making such statements authoritative and final, making them terms of salvation and tests of fellowship.

II. We pass then from this point of our objection to state some of the grounds and reasons of it.

1. Creeds, as defined in what has been said already, are without warrant or authority in the word of God. I do not mean simply that there is no command or precedent in Scripture or inference from it which may justify the use of creeds, but that the fundamental principle on which they rest is without any support in Scripture and is indeed contradictory to it. That is, there is no provision anywhere in Scripture for any authorized interpretation of its meaning. I would be perfectly willing to stake the whole case and rest the whole argument here. Nowhere in the word of God is there provided or appointed any power of authoritative interpretation. The Scriptures are peculiar in this. The constitution of the United States has in the Supreme Court or the Judiciary a constituted power of interpretation; and we find in these judicial decisions the authorized interpretations of the constitution, so that in addition to the many private commentaries on the constitution, none of which have any authority other than their own inherent reasonableness, we have these authoritative expositions of the organic law of our country. But there is no supreme court of Jesus Christ, no divinely ordained judiciary whose office it is to sit in judgment on the meaning of the Scriptures and render decisions from which there is no appeal. So the creeds have constituted for themselves an authorized interpretation. Besides numerous private commentaries on the creeds,

there are certain official bodies who may decide on the consistency of any given doctrine with the creed, and whose decision in the case, for all who accept the creed, is final. But there is no such body provided in Scripture to ascertain its interpretation. The teachers and ministers of the church have a peculiar though not exclusive office of interpretation; yet their interpretations have no more authority than the same interpretations would have from the lips of a layman. The same is true of the interpretation of any particular body of Christians; that interpretation has no more authority than it would have if it proceeded from the humblest member in the church. That is, the right of private judgment, which is the fundamental principle of Protestantism, is also a fundamental principle of Scripture. There is no appointed authority of interpretation, but every child of God, every servant of Jesus Christ, has the right, and consequently the obligation, to interpret the meaning of Scripture for himself. I do not wonder that the ablest apologists and advocates of the creeds would restrict within very narrow limits the right of private judgment. Their course is logical and inevitable. Indeed the only logical defense of creeds, as it appears to me, is to say, (1) either that the priest has the power of interpretation entrusted to him as his exclusive prerogative, as the Romish Church does say or do, or (2) that God raised

up and inspired special men in different ages of the church to formulate creeds and deliver to his people the authoritative interpretation of his word, as some Protestants hold. One thing is plain, there is no logical defense of creeds consistent with the divinely guaranteed right of private judgment. Sooner or later either that or the creeds must go overboard.

2. The objection to creeds, however, is not only that they are without warrant in Scripture, but, secondly, that they tend to set aside and make void the word of God, and substitute for the commandments of God the traditions and interpretations of men. This comes about in several ways. I will not speak of the obvious errors which they contain, and which, so far as they are received, must annul the divine truth, because the fact that the creeds teach error is not the chief ground of my objection against them. If they were all true I should still oppose them. Because in any case they serve to divert attention from the truth and fix the mind and thought of the church upon what is at best a mere interpretation of the truth. The heart's interest in the truth is transferred from the Bible to the creed. I know this will be vehemently denied, but it appears to me that no fact in history is more conclusively established. If one will take the trouble to look into literature in the time when the power of creeds was greatest, he will see that the language and logic of the creeds play as great

a part as the words of Scripture, that the appeal is as often made to the creeds, that their authority is as freely quoted, and that they have altogether as great a place in the mind of the author as the word of God itself. Commentaries, sermons, systems of theology, plainly show that the creed divided and distracted the minds of the authors from a thorough study of the oracles of God. And not only do the creeds divert the mind from that all-absorbing attention to the word of God necessary to gather its meaning, but it also accomplishes the perversion of that sacred Word, and that in a very obvious and inevitable way. Every man who subscribes to a creed promises virtually to read the Bible in the light of that creed; to construe its meaning according to this human and fallible statement of doctrine. This checks all independent investigation and makes him trim down his own apprehensions of truth to suit the authorized standard. That cannot but result in the perversion and sacrifice of truth. That is, when we read the word in the candle-light of the creed instead of the sure light of its own self-evidencing truth and in the light of the necessary laws of interpretation, frequent perversion of its meaning is inevitable. Thus it is most humiliating to see the great Augustine, after he has laid down with marvelous clearness and correctness the laws, one may almost say the axioms of Scripture interpretation, groping and groveling in the hopeless endeavor to accord his

interpretations with the vaporings of Irenæus and Origen, whose views had no other recommendation than that they had been incorporated into the creed of the church, and therefore had the sanction of authority. It is pitiful to see his Titanic soul prostrate itself before these pigmies, that not only his towering intellect and the great laws of interpretation which he has announced, but even the word of God as well, may be trampled in the dust. And yet that is bound to be the result when Augustine must read the Scripture according to the authoritative interpretations of Origen and Irenæus.

3. It must be charged against the creeds also that they tend to arrest the progress of thought in the minds of those that accept them. It is true that we are to have no new revelations of truth; the faith has been once for all delivered to the saints. He that adds to it or takes from it shall do it at his peril. But man's apprehension of the truth should enlarge from age to age. We are exhorted to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Now the effect of the creeds is to put a period to progress, to stunt or stay the growth of knowledge, to make the impression that God has no more light to break from his Word than that which the creeds reflect. They seek to tether the mind of the church to this or that period of history, this or that system of theology, and forbid it to range through the whole

realm of truth. They would surround the church with a Chinese wall forbidding either the egress of error or the entrance of truth. They would keep the ship of Zion coasting along the headlands of tradition and, instead of steering its course out into the great, wide sea of God's truth, according to the chart and compass of the Divine word and providence, they would anchor it in some land-locked harbor, leaving it only a sufficient length of cable to move around in a safe circle and play progress until the Lord comes. The creeds have not succeeded, indeed, in arresting the progress of the church, but that is simply because the church has outgrown and cut loose from them, holding them only in form while denying their substance.

4. There are other reasons which should constrain us to contend earnestly against the power of creeds: such as that they promote insincerity and hypocrisy in many who profess to hold and teach them; that they repel many who would not be repelled by the New Testament; that they are more difficult of interpretation than the Scriptures which they essay to interpret, and that they are a fruitful source of sectarianism, of strife and of schism, dividing asunder those whom God hath joined together.

Hear, then, the conclusion of the whole matter. The gospel does not require you to accept a creed, but to accept Christ. It does not propose to you a long statement of articles, but it propounds to you

a single inquiry: "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" Can you say with Simon Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God?" Wilt thou confess the Lord Jesus to the glory of God the Father? This is the saving faith. This is the testimony of God's word: "If thou wilt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." "If you know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

VII.

CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP.

“So therefore whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he can not be my disciple.”—LUKE 14: 33.

WE are impressed, first of all, with the harsh and forbidding aspect of Jesus as he appears in the utterance of these words. His face, if not frowning, is certainly not smiling. His hands are not stretched forth in tender entreaty and gracious invitation, but instead of beckoning the multitude to follow on he bids them be off and gone. His words and gesture, his expression of countenance, all seem to repel men from his presence. The very tones of his voice must have seemed stern and awful as he pointed to the cruel cross and said, “If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me;” pointed to their homes and their parents, their husbands, their wives, their children, their possessions, yea, laid his hand on their very lives and said, “If any man hate not father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, houses and lands, yea, and his own life also, he can not be my disciple.” After these words we are somewhat surprised not to read those words which we find in another place, “From that time many of his disciples went back and

walked with him no more," as perhaps they would have done if they had understood him.

And what further impresses and surprises us, what must have puzzled and offended the multitudes, and perhaps his own disciples, for the time, is the apparent conflict and contradiction of these words with other and recent utterances of this same Lord. In the hearing of the multitudes, perhaps in the hearing of many in this multitude, he had said: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." These sweet and rhythmic notes of love—what a discord between them and the hard and harsh tones of the text! "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." In this very chapter he had likened his kingdom to a great supper, to which all were graciously invited to come by the messengers of the lord who made it; yea, these messengers were commissioned to go out into the streets and lanes of the city, the highways and hedges of the country, and compel men to come into the supper that the house might be filled. And now when they are coming in great multitudes, he seems to meet them at the door and drive them back, by making the terms of entrance into his kingdom so hard and so humiliating that

no reasonable man can be expected to comply with them.

I shall not pause long to explain this seeming contradiction. I admit its force. One who heard the Lord on these two different occasions, first inviting and then forbidding; first saying "Come on," and then saying "Go back," might very plausibly have concluded that he had altered his tone and changed his mind, or that an altogether different mood was upon him.

But I only take time to say now that that is an altogether shallow and mistaken explanation of the seeming difference of these two utterances. We make a great mistake if we think that love is only soft and tender and inviting. It must be sometimes stern and awful and angry. The same voice which woe in so much mercy must sometimes thunder forth in indignation and wrath. Jesus sees that the multitudes are following him without counting the cost, without considering the consequences, without any appreciation of his real mission, or of what it means to be his disciple, and so he turns on them in terrible rebuke and in solemn warning. "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he can not be my disciple."

Now let us give earnest heed to these words lest we should let any part of their meaning slip through our minds without profit.

First, this great hard law of discipleship is a

universal law. "Whosoever there be of you who does not renounce all can not be my disciple." The Lord does not slice this multitude up into sections, and bind this law on some, leaving the rest free. He did not call out the little circle of his immediate disciples—Peter, Andrew, James, John, Thomas and the rest of the twelve,—and say, on you and you only rests this great obligation: "Unless you forsake all, you can not be my apostles or my disciples." Neither did he elect from the number a few of the wisest and the richest and the noblest, and lay upon them this hard and inexorable law. Nor yet did he say that a few in each section must forsake all and the rest be freed from the sacrifice. That one word "whosoever" means much more than this. In that word Christ causes, so to say, every man in the multitude to pass singly and in his own person before him, and as he passes lays this law upon him, saying: "Thou art the man," and "unless thou in thine own person shalt obey this law, thou canst not be my disciple." Then the Lord did not divide his disciples up according to the different ages of the church—the first, or apostolic age; the second, or primitive age; the third, or apostate age; the fourth, or reformatory age; the fifth; or missionary age; and say in some of these ages this great law of discipleship shall be binding, and in others it shall be null and of no effect. He did not mean that in the age of the apostles and the first Christians

his great law should obtain, but after that it should gradually and insensibly lose its force. But we may well suppose that as he went on his way to the cross, and turned to proclaim the great law of discipleship to the multitudes, his eye not only rested on this Jewish multitude here before him, but glanced away through the ages and wandered out into all countries and beheld all the multitudes who through all times and climes should profess to be his disciples, and put upon them all this duty of renouncing all things for his sake. Not upon some—ministers, missionaries, monastics—but upon every disciple in every age, until he himself shall appear a second time without sin unto salvation. “Whosoever there be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he can not be my disciple.” That wide word takes in every soul of every age. You know well how we interpret another “whosoever.” “Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” That great invitation includes us all. That is not meant for ministers and missionaries and saints only, but for the wide world. The old Puritan divine of the last century, John Berridge, was accustomed to say that he found more comfort in that word “whosoever” than if he had found his own name written in the text. “If,” said he, “it were, let John Berridge come and take of the water of life freely, I might think that another John Berridge was meant; but when it says whosoever, I know it means me.”

And so can every one of us say, "It means me" more confidently than if we found our own names inscribed on that sacred page. But that whosoever is no wider than this: if it is true that "whosoever will may come and take of the water of life freely," it is no less true that "whosoever there be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath can not be my disciple." They stand or fall together.

But, oh, you say, it is such a hard condition! To renounce all, and not only that, but to hate all, if need be. "If any man come to me and *hate* not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he can not be my disciple." This is putting the case so strong that even the preachers wince and explain it away, saying, that we are to understand the word "hate" as meaning not hate really, but love less. We must love all these less than we love our Lord, even as he himself teaches in another place. But we are not talking now about what our Lord says in another place, but what he says in this place; and the thing he does say is that "if any man hate not father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, he can not be my disciple." Now hate does not mean love in any degree, either less or more. The two words are the very opposite and mutually exclusive of each other.

What our Lord means is that we are to hate the very mother that bore us *in so far* as she

would stand between us and himself. Whatever or whoever comes between a soul and that soul's Savior is to be despised. The meaning is not that we are to hate any except so far as they hate Christ and would hinder our obedience to him. But to that extent they are our enemies and are to be regarded and treated as such. For a man's parents are no longer parents if they seek to separate him from Christ. The father or mother who holds back a child from following Jesus, virtually disinherits the child, and annuls the relation between them. The child has no alternative left but to despise the counsel of his parents, and in so far as they seek to enforce that counsel, to despise and resist them. Let me try to make the point plain by an illustration, for it is one of exceeding importance.

A British paper tells of the daughter of an English nobleman, who in one of their summer vacations heard the gospel preached by a humble but earnest evangelist of one of the dissenting churches, and was so touched and moved by it that she resolved at once to give herself to Christ, and did it. The girl's conversion annoyed and chagrined her proud father. At first he was disposed to treat it as a foolish fancy, which would wear itself out in a few weeks. And so by travel over the country, by sojourning in fashionable watering places, by surrounding her with gay companions, by providing her with light and frivolous

reading, he hoped to wean her heart from her Savior. But that heart was fixed. All her temptations only rooted her soul more and more in the Lord. At length the proud father resolved on a desperate expedient. He would put her faith to a final and terrible test. A great, gay, heartless company were gathered at the nobleman's home. It was arranged that in that company she was to be asked to sing a certain light and irreverent ditty which she had often sung to the amusement of the company in days past, and if she refused to sing it now, her refusal would be regarded as an insult to her father's guests. It was, indeed, a terrible temptation. The moment of trial came. The song was called for; she was escorted to the piano. Running her hand tremblingly over its keys for a moment, her eyes cast down, but her heart raised in silent prayer, she began, not the words called for, but some very simple and solemn lines she had learned from the people among whom she found her Lord:

"No room for mirth or trifling here," etc.

The minstrel ceased. The painful silence was hardly broken by the noiseless footsteps of the company, as one after another they left the place and sought their homes. The father, completely broken in spirit, embraced his child and implored her prayers for his soul. We can not say that the girl hated her father except so far as he stood be-

tween her and her Savior, and sought to make her deny her Lord. But so far she refused to own him as her father, and literally hated his instructions. As often as he thrust his will between her soul and her Savior she deliberately trampled it under foot and went on after her Lord. I think she knew what it was to hate father and mother in order to follow Christ.

If, then, the dear relation of parent must be despised, if need be, for Christ's sake, how much more do we need to renounce everything else in order to be his disciple! We must forsake all our possessions to follow him. We can own nothing if we would be owned of him. Those multitudes were following in the hope of being enriched by that glorious inheritance he would bestow upon them when he established his kingdom. They supposed that the wealth of the heathen would be wrested from them in order that the children of the kingdom might be made rich. He turns upon them and denounces that delusion. Think not, he would say, that you are to be made rich by becoming my disciples. On the contrary, you are to be impoverished. The first and great condition of becoming my disciple is that you shall forsake all that you have, and become paupers for Christ's sake. "Whoso does not forsake all can not be my disciple."

And this helps us to understand another hard passage, which has given the preachers and the

rich brethren no little concern. To a rich young ruler who came to him, the Lord said: "Go and sell all you have, and give to the poor, and come and follow me, and you shall have treasure in heaven." And in explaining these words to his disciples, he said: "It is impossible for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven; it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." You have all heard this explained. The needle's eye—so some preachers tell us—is one of the small gates in the walls of Jerusalem through which a man might pass, but through which a camel could not go except with great difficulty. If he was a well-trained beast, and was at himself, and stooped very low, and tugged and squeezed hard enough, he might at last slip through, but it would be a long and difficult labor. So our Lord is made to teach that even a rich man can enter his kingdom, but it will be a mighty tight squeeze.

Now I am constrained to repudiate this exegesis as laying too great a strain not only, on the camel, but on the text. Our Lord is not talking about a difficult but an impossible thing. He says plainly that it is impossible for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. Now we see why it is impossible. It is impossible for a rich man because it is impossible for any man. Every one must forsake all that he has in order to be Christ's disciple.

And of course there is no exception in favor of the rich man. Christ requires of him just what he requires of the multitudes. Whosoever forsaketh not all that he hath cannot be my disciple. By what right then do we hold on to our property after becoming Christians? How happens it that some of us, though we profess to be disciples of Christ, retain our property and increase it continually? Does not this text explicitly forbid a disciple to possess a foot of land or a dollar of money or even a coat to his back? Indeed it does. And there is only one way in which we can fairly have these things, and that is as the agents of our Lord. We are the stewards of the manifold grace of God. What we have we hold as a trust, and not in our own right. We must use it as of the ability which God giveth, and as those who must give account to God. This is the teaching of our Lord. Take, for example, his parable of the talents. Men are given different degrees of ability; but whether it be one talent or ten talents, it is a trust, and not our own; it is to be used not in our name, but in Christ's name and with a constant thought of our final and certain accountability to him. Christian stewardship explains all.

Suppose one of you shall become a disciple of Christ to-day. You do, if you become a disciple indeed, forsake all that you have. But you go home and find that the Lord has not sent after his property. Your house still stands in its place.

You find the furniture, the pictures, the valuables all in their places. Neither do you find there has been any notice left that he will send for them at a specified time, or that you must quit on a certain day, or sell out all and put it in the church treasury. You go down town and find the money in the cash drawer just as you left it Saturday evening, and your bank account stands as it was. You appear then to have lost nothing, to have forsaken nothing. But if you understand yourself you have forsaken all claim of ownership to these things and have offered them all freely at the foot of the cross, on which the Lord sits, no longer crucified, but coronated and glorified. It is all offered unto him. Now if it is his pleasure to give all these things back to you as his disciple, but with them to give also the charge that you shall henceforth use them in his name and as the agent and steward of his property and his bounty, they are still just as truly his own as if he had come down in a whirlwind and borne them back with him into glory.

It happened in a southern city, some years ago, that a wholesale grocer failed. Instead of deeding over all the property he had left to his wife or his friends, he called a meeting of his creditors, spread out before them a complete statement of his liabilities, then gave to them a full inventory of all his assets, even to his household property, and asked them to distribute it among them as

might seem best. His creditors were positively shocked. They did not know what to make of such a man. One by one they began to walk around in the great establishment to see if things were just as they were said to be. Presently, as of one consent and with one voice, they said, "We will leave this man in charge of this business. We will make him our agent, without bond." They called him in and announced their decision, saying, "Carry on this business as our trustee and render an account to us at the end of the year." Well, I am sorry I cannot tell you that this man grew rich, or that his creditors lost no money. But it can be said that it was a loss over which they did not grieve, and their agent closed out the business an honest man and with the respect and esteem of those who had entrusted their property to his care.

We, too, have wasted our Lord's substance in riotous living. In our conversion we confess our sin and surrender ourselves and our all unto him. He delivers it again into our hands, but charges us to use ourselves and our possessions, not as our own but as his who has redeemed us with his precious blood. "For ye are not your own: therefore glorify God in your bodies and spirits, which are his."

VIII.

SEEKING THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

"But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."—MATT. 6: 33.

I. THE kingdom of God is the domain in which God is acknowledged as king. If in your heart God's law is supreme, God's will is sovereign, God's name hallowed and honored above every name, then your heart is the kingdom of God. And the whole extent of God's kingdom on earth is measured by the number of hearts in which his authority is enthroned above all. To seek the kingdom of God, therefore, is to seek that state of mind and heart in which his will is the supreme law. To seek the righteousness of God is essentially the same thing. It is to seek right relations with God; and the right relation is a subject relation. Whether that relation be represented as creator and creature, sovereign and subject, father and child, it is always on man's part a subject relation.

It is the work of sin to put us out of such relation; to make us equal with God, or to exalt us above God. It was the ambition of equality with God that led to the first sin. God created man subject to himself, but he aspired after equality. Not content with the tree of life, of which he

might eat freely and live, he must eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and die. The motive of the eating was that man might be as God, knowing good and evil. The divine reason for the commandment was death. But the tempter, opposing and maligning God, presented another reason, God's jealousy. He knows that if you eat of this you will be equal to him. And the prospect of equality with God was too much for the man's power of resistance; he ate and fell. In reaching after equality with God he ceased to be a subject and became a rebel and an alien. That is, he was thrust into false relations with God, and so thrust out of his kingdom. For the kingdom of God is like Eden. None can dwell in it except such as are willingly subject to God's will.

Not only in the matter of knowledge, but in the matter of dominion, we seek equality with God. Now absolute dominion and distinction belong to God alone. Man has neither the right nor the power to dominate the world or direct the movements of history. It is not in man's power to direct his own life. The words of the prophet, "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," are manifestly true, as is shown both by reflection and experience. If we will only consider what is involved in the direction of a single life, we must see how it transcends all human wisdom. When a man directs the course of the ship across

the ocean or through the narrows, he has at hand a chart and compass or before him certain landmarks that may guide him. When a man directs an army he has a map of the country before him, an estimate of the enemy against him, and is able to anticipate with reasonable certainty various maneuvers, surprises and counter-movements that might oppose his way. Even the pilot who directs the steamer down the St. Lawrence rapids is going a way he has often gone before. But it is not so with the course of human life. We are going into a dark and mysterious future and along a course never trodden by man before. Every path leads to the grave, but it coincides with no other up to that point. And so experience proves that no man has directed his own life. It has not been what he wished or proposed. The old will testify that they do not direct their own steps. We are hardly more than leaves tossed to and fro by the winds of fortune, or misfortune, some being carried up into the clouds and others cast into the ditch and covered with dirt and mould.

Yet men are ever trying to take their lives into their own hands and seeking to take the place of God, directing their own lives, instead of being subject to his sovereignty. They are willing to have God, if they can give him a back seat while they take the lead. The reason that many build up godless lives is because God will not take a subordinate place, and they will give him no

other. Like a man building a temple with a high seat for himself and a lower one for God. Men are willing to have Christ on board as a passenger provided they can do the piloting and commanding. Christ will consent to no such arrangement. He abandons the ship.

Now, to receive the kingdom of God is to re-establish this subject relation between God and man; to have God king in our soul; to accept him as our sovereign. Christ is come to establish such relations between God and man. He has come to found God's kingdom in the earth and in the heart; to turn the alien into a friend, and the rebel into a subject. He does this by witnessing to the truth of our proper relation to God; by revealing the gracious character of God; by exemplifying in his own life perfect subjection to the Father's will.

II. How should we seek this kingdom of God?

1. Earnestly. So much is implied in the word "seek." The word suggests to us the picture of a man in diligent quest of something; as a shepherd seeking his lost sheep; a woman her lost coin; a man seeking for silver or gold; a pearl diver seeking goodly pearls; the student seeking knowledge. This harmonizes with other Scriptures. Isa. 55: 5, 6; Matt. 13:45; Luke 13:25. This is not a common view. We are gradually losing the idea of luck, and learning that in the things of this world we must seek if we would

find. There are still a good many people who believe that life is a lottery; who expect fortune by a lucky speculation; who are waiting to be borne on to fortune by some tidal wave of prosperity; who are waiting for booms and bonanzas. But most people are learning better; learning that labor, diligence and earnestness win the rewards of life.

But in spiritual things we are not yet so far advanced. We think that it is not by seeking, not by earnest effort, that we are to enter the kingdom of God; but it is to strike us like lightning; that we are to stumble into the kingdom by accident; that we are to find it as Saul found it while searching for his father's asses; that the Lord will some day open our eyes and take us by the hand and lead us in in his good time; or that the door is always open and we may enter when we will. But if we ever enter Christ's kingdom it will be by seeking it earnestly.

This is the fact; but what is its explanation? The reason we have to seek the rewards of life so earnestly to enter into the kingdom of worldly success, or wealth, or fame, is twofold: 1. We have to seek things because they are hidden, and therefore hard to find. Thus knowledge is hid in vast libraries, or multitudinous volumes of history, or in obscure phenomena of nature. Thus the forces of nature, electricity for example, were long hidden and had to be earnestly sought. So the min-

eral wealth of the earth. So voyages of discovery for hidden continents were necessary. So the laws and conditions of success in life are more or less hidden from ordinary observation and have to be searched for in order to be discovered. The successful man is he who has to ferret out these laws and conform to them. But is this so of the kingdom of Christ? Is his kingdom a hidden kingdom? It was once like leaven. But it has now manifested itself. If hid, it is to them that are lost. It is published abroad; the sound of it is gone out like sunlight into all the world. Are not its laws plain? Is not the way into it such that the way-faring may enter, or is it, then, that there are so many seeking this kingdom that competition makes it hard to obtain? That is why it is so hard to win the prizes of life—there are so many seeking them. But there are not so many seeking the prizes of eternal life. Nor would the way be harder by competition. Spiritual privileges are bestowed by a different law. To give them to one is not to deny another. The increase of your wealth may be my impoverishment, but not so your faith. The need of struggle lies in the double nature which we have, animal and spiritual, which are contrary one to the other. It requires a great effort to keep our bodies under and our souls on top. Outward temptations assail us in our search for the kingdom, and seek to draw us or drive us off the track of it. Care for our bodies calls us off.

Many voices are crying to the right and to the left.

2. Seek it first, because it is first. First things, first. That is a rule of business. When you go to your offices to-morrow, you will first give attention to the most important things. This thing may be important because you have great financial interests at stake; that because your word is out. But you will not, if you are wise, consume the morning hours with trifles while weightier matters are neglected. Is there any weightier matter than God and your relations to him? Those are the matters that are meant by seeking the kingdom of heaven. Is there any greater matter than the soul? Is there anything more important than to escape the power of sin? than getting a worthy aim in life, something that makes life worth living? Money-getting is no worthy end. That is, chipping off the soul and putting it in your money-drawer or depositing it in bank.

Then, we do not truly grasp anything until we get a view of the spiritual end of life. Carlyle's saying is true, that he who does not grasp eternity does not truly grasp time. He who understands nothing of the heavens knows little of the earth; for most of the movements of the earth are from forces that lie outside of it. It is only when we read life in the light of eternity that its lessons become plain. It takes not only a long time, but a true heart to know anybody or anything rightly. And that we can get only by coming into the king-

dom. All duty becomes clear in this first duty. So we have no power to do the duties of life except as we come to Christ. Men are oppressed with a sense of weakness and failure. Beginning with self-reliance, they soon become discouraged. Christ restores them to a true self-confidence. Coleridge had power to inspire men with a sense of this power. This is why the publicans and sinners heard Christ gladly. He made it clear they were something besides sinners.

3. We should seek the kingdom of God now. Now is the day of salvation. Here is where so many stick. Almost everyone believes in the gospel. Few believe in the gospel of now. This policy of delay is the counsel of the evil one. You intend to do it some time. You may have wish, inclination, but purpose, resolves, settled intention of the mind, have you that? I do not believe hell is paved with good intentions. If you intend to be saved at some time, you will make haste to fulfil your intention.

Think not of deathbed repentance. I warn you against that refuge of lies. I have seen something of that. My observation is summed up in these points: 1. People that are insensible to God's mercies through life are not generally otherwise at death. 2. Mental and bodily conditions do not make the consideration of this momentous subject practicable. People are preoccupied with pain, mind lost in the lurid ravings of delirium, or over-

come in stupor from which it can not be aroused. The deathbed is a good place to enjoy salvation, but not to seek it. 3. At best such repentance is a forlorn hope; its genuineness is always a matter of doubt. A Christian physician in Boston had his attention called to this fact, and for years noted cases in his note book until he had the names of three hundred who had professed repentance on what they thought was their deathbed, and only three per cent. of the number after recovery remembered their repentance or honored their profession. A London missionary noted three thousand cases in his long life with almost the same result. This accords with the experiences of all who have made any observations here. There were cases of fever in which the patients remained perfectly rational and exceedingly religious, but could not recall a thing that had happened in that time on their recovery. It seems to me that such testimony is worth heeding; that it is a powerful illustration of the text, and a solemn warning against procrastination. Therefore, hear his voice to-day, to-night, saying, "Follow me. Acquaint thyself now with God and be at peace."

IX.

TRIFLING WITH SPIRITUAL DUTY.

“And they all with one consent began to make excuse.”—LUKE 14: 18.

JESUS relied a good deal more on private and informal teaching, no doubt, than on his more public and formal discourses. So far from confining his teaching to the synagogue or the great assembly, he used the highway, the home, the place where a festal company was gathered, as fit places and occasions for his instructions. This indeed appears to have been the manner of his age, and it is greatly to be regretted that private and informal teaching has gone so much out of fashion. The commandment given to Israel in the law touching the instruction of their children is worthy of our consideration. “These words which I command thee,” the sum of which was love to God and one’s neighbor, “shall be upon thine heart, and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and shall talk of them when thou sittest in thine house and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down and when thou risest up.” That is only saying that these things should be taught at all times and places, and that we should by no means rely on public and official teaching to

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do the whole work. This precept is fulfilled in the example of Christ. As he had opportunity he taught men, and he was apt to see opportunity where another teacher would have judged instruction inappropriate.

Here is a striking instance. One of the rulers of the Pharisees had invited him to a feast on the Sabbath day. He did not refuse the invitation because it was the Sabbath, nor yet because the invitation came from a Pharisee who had probably a hostile intention in asking him. Nor yet does he feel himself under any obligation of silence because he was the guest of such a man. He would not be muzzled by the proprieties of the occasion. In the first place, there was a sick man present. He anticipated and silenced all objection to healing him on the Sabbath day, and then healed him and let him go. In the next place he noted how certain of the more ambitious and ill-bred guests chose out for themselves the most honorable seats at the feast-table, those nearest the host or the favored guest, and rebuked their pride with a parable on humility, the point of which was, "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he that exalteth himself shall be abased." Then observing that the guests were of the richer class of people, he puts in another parable, a plea for the poor, saying to one of them, "When thou makest a dinner, call not thy brethren, nor thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors, lest they also

bid thee again and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, bid the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and thou shalt be blessed, 'because they have not wherewith to recompense thee, but thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.' This is not meant as a prohibition of all social entertainment of one's equals; but it only brings out that the motive of such entertainments may be simply the payment of a debt or an investment with the hope of larger gain, and that the consideration of unselfishness and charity does not enter into such entertainments. But a true man will not be content to do good or show courtesy to those only who show the same to him, but will extend his kindness to those who have nothing to give in turn but gratitude. It is a rebuke to all such as show no regard to those outside of "our set."

The picture of rewards at the resurrection of the just, under the figure of a feast in which the great God communed with the righteous as with his guests and friends, and dealt out to each one his recompense, so much affected one of the persons present that he exclaimed: "Blessed is he that shall sit at that feast, blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." And then Jesus speaks another parable to show that though this entrance into God's kingdom is the greatest of all blessings, men do not generally regard it as such, but make a light matter of the invitation to make

ready and enter the kingdom. "A certain man made a great supper; and he bade many; and he sent forth his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said, I have bought a field and I must needs go out and see it. I pray thee, have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I can not come."

Now what one is bound to feel in reading these excuses is that these men are trifling. These excuses are not seriously made. The real reason why these men do not accept this invitation is not that they can not, but they care not to accept. There is not only no desire to accept, but a disinclination and a decision not to accept it. They do not want to go to this feast and they do not mean to; but they would like at the same time to be civil and polite, and have, perhaps, at the same time, a secret misgiving that they ought to go, and so they seek to dispose of the whole matter with an excuse. They bid the servant: "Say to your Master, I would like to come, but it so happens just at this time that it is impossible. That field must be looked after to-day; those oxen must be proved at once; and this bridal feast, you know it is impossible to put off that."

Is not this picture true to life? The great difficulty with most men is that they trifle with spiritual duty. They do not deny its obligations, still less do they support that denial with any reasons that are sound or serious even in their own estimation; but they take refuge in their flimsy, threadbare excuses, which they feel, as they utter them, are not the real reasons of their refusal to follow Christ and seek the welfare of their souls.

I am not to be understood as saying that there are none who feel that they have good reasons for deferring or refusing to accept the invitation of the gospel; that there are none without or within the church who are harassed and hindered by honest doubts, by real difficulties, and that it is mere frivolity or perversity which hinders such people from duty, and not obstacles of another and more serious sort. But these are not the persons brought to view in this parable, nor do they make up the great majority of those who refuse the great and gracious invitation of Jesus. They are in fact but a small minority. Most of the reasons given for neglect of spiritual duty are frivolous and futile; not reasons at all, but mere excuses, as the parable plainly designates them.

Take these three excuses which we find in the parable and which, in fact, are the most common excuses urged in apology for neglecting our spiritual duty; "property, business, domestic ties." With one man it is real estate. He has bought a

piece of land and he must hasten to see his bargain, and perhaps to find a purchaser at considerable advance on what he paid for it. It has been observed that a boom in real estate, while it may add to the church treasurer's comfort somewhat, does not fill the pews of the church nor the hearts and lives of the people with love for truth and righteousness. Men plead their real estate as an excuse for remissness in religious duty. Yet every man of the least reflection knows that both in the acquisition and in the use of real estate he needs the guidance of religious principle, and so far from this being a reason of neglecting religion, it is in fact a reason for greater attention to it. The increase of property increases responsibility, temptation and peril, and there should be a corresponding increase of religious interest to counteract and counterwork the evils attendant upon this increase of substance. Real estate is a reason for religion; it is only an excuse for irreligion. The same may be said of business. The Spanish proverb that "the busy man has but one tempter, while a thousand devils beset the idler," is only half true. It is true so far as the idler is concerned. But the temptations of the busy man are manifold also, and do not differ in number so much as in kind from those of the idler. The temptation of the business man is to make himself a slave and to let his business pursue him and destroy him as the sleuthhounds pursue the criminal or the slave to

his death. Such a man needs religion to tell him that he must not only be diligent in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. And no one knows that better than himself; no one knows better that he of all men needs religious faith and motives to brace and guide him and save him from making his life a madcap's chase for a bauble. When, therefore, he says he is too busy to be a Christian, he knows that he is trifling with his true interests; that he is giving an excuse, not rendering a reason.

And domestic ties, how often are these made to cover our sins of negligence and indifference! Care for wife, children, home, making an honest living for one's family, duties in one's household. Every man who seeks the souls of his fellows and urges them to the highest duty, meets this excuse in a thousand forms and tones. And yet, my friends, do we need to be told again that we can build no true home without we have faith in Christ for the foundation; that marriage, to meet its highest ends, must be a union of two souls in Christ—the husband must love his wife as Christ also loved his church, and the wife must reverence her husband; parents must bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, if they would bring them up truly; and children also must obey their parents in the Lord. It is religion which has transformed marriage from a mere compact of convenience, to be dissolved at the pleasure of the

strongest, to a league of indissoluble love, of imperishable affection, and has linked into one sacred and blessed trinity the words *mother*, *home* and *heaven*. If you "have married a wife," then, or even live in faint expectation of having a home of your own, that is the highest reason for your accepting the gospel and conforming your life to its demands. And the plea that family care or duty prevents duty to your soul and your Savior is only an excuse, and a very poor one. It is trifling in a matter in which you should act with utmost sobriety.

Let me notice, briefly, two other excuses which are often given as reasons for neglecting religious duty. It is said by some, in answer to our entreaties to accept Christ, that science has discredited somewhat the claims of religion and rendered it less worthy and less easy of acceptance. Now, being myself a friend of science, and having no sort of fear of its ultimate effects on faith, I freely admit its marvelous advance in the last quarter of a century, that it has discredited some views of religion and greatly modified others, and I strongly incline, if I do not fully consent, to its main conclusions. But has science really touched the essential matters of Christian faith and duty? The existence of God, the love of God, the revelation of his love and will in Jesus Christ and the hope of immortality—has science discredited these in the least or in anywise affected them, except to admit

that they are above and beyond its power to attain? And the duties which grow out of this revelation of God and his relations to us, the duty of repentance, faith, obedience, service and holiness, have these been in the least discredited by any science, ancient or modern? Every considerate and competent judge in the premises confesses they have not been, and owns, therefore, that no growth of science can make this faith unreasonable or this duty void. It can only serve as an excuse, never as a reason for unbelief and unrighteousness.

But, again, the differences among Christians are made an excuse for neglecting Christian duty. These are certainly numerous and grievous, and yet, they should hardly be an insurmountable obstacle to one who desires earnestly to enter into the kingdom of Christ. For, after all, that is so simple a matter that no amount of difference or discussion can long obscure it to one who is resolved on knowing the truth, one who is taking his life in earnest. What is it to enter any kingdom? First of all, faith in the king, the belief that he is what he claims to be, and therefore has the right to our lives and service. Second, the renunciation of all other authority and of all resistance to his authority in the past. That is repentance. Third, the expression of this faith and submission in some public, appointed way. It is as to the way in which this expression is to be made that professing Christians differ. All agree that

baptism is the proper way of expressing faith and repentance, but all are not agreed as to what is baptism. And yet all are agreed that he that is buried with Christ is truly baptized, or so nearly all that those who dissent may be left out of consideration for practical purposes. Why not follow that way of expressing your faith in Christ which not only seems to be most clearly revealed in Scripture, but which all Christians consent is a good and a true way? After all, these differences only obscure and do not obstruct the way of duty, and he that is determined to walk therein will not fail to find it. It is only they who seek to escape duty who take refuge in excuses, which can never hide the way to such as long to find it and follow it.

The point of what I have said then is this: that the reason of our neglect of spiritual duty is the disinclination and determination to neglect it, and not the excuses for it which we are wont to plead. And this I have tried to make clear by an examination of some of these excuses. If anything further is needed to confirm your minds in what I have said, you may find it in the very *manner* in which these excuses are given. They are uttered in such a languid and formal way, with so little of seriousness and earnestness, with such an air of one who feels that he must say something and who can say nothing better than this, and it is so plain that the person himself does not attach

much weight to these alleged reasons and does not expect us to respect them very highly, that it is really impossible to treat them seriously. It is, in fact, easier to argue with open atheism, with the most radical and mournful unbelief, and even with those who are given over to gross immorality than with one who hedges behind such trivial and delusive excuses as these; and it is easier to convince open and defiant unbelief, than this easy-going and time-serving indifference.

Now we should mark well the conclusion of this parable, that we may discern the divine dealing with those who make light of the soul's salvation and treat eternity itself as a trifle. "So that servant came and showed his lord these things." Then the Lord of the house was angry and said, "None of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." God respects those who have real reasons for delaying to accept the offer of his love; those who lack opportunity; those who are ignorant of their obligations through no fault of their own; those who have honest doubts as to whether the gospel is an invitation from him, doubts, that is, which remain after earnest investigation and in spite of a humble and truth-loving spirit; but for those who trifle with his message, who fritter away their great opportunity in vain excuses, which even they themselves cannot respect, there remain only the kindling of his anger and exclusion from the

feast and the fellowship which his love has provided.

Matthew Henry tells a story of a great statesman in Queen Elizabeth's time who retired from public life in his latter days and gave himself to serious thought. His former gay companions came to visit him and told him he was becoming melancholy. "No," he replied, "I am only serious; for all are serious round about us. God is serious in observing us; Christ is serious in inviting us and interceding for us; the truths of the gospel are serious; our spiritual enemies are serious in their endeavors to ruin us, and why should not I be serious too?" Why not, indeed? Why meet the most momentous duties with vain and frivolous excuses? Life is a solemn trust committed to each one of us from God, and we must every one appear before him in judgment to render not an excuse, but an account of the way in which we have used it. Consider well these words of our Lord: "If I had not come and spoken unto them they had not had sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin."

X.

OBEDIENCE AND ASSURANCE.

“And hereby know we that we know him, if we keep his commandments.”
—1 JOHN 2: 3.

THIS, you will observe, is a somewhat singular form of expression. We may not only know God, but we may know that we know him. “Hereby know we that we know God, if we keep his commandments.” Not only a singular statement this, but superfluous, you may think. Of course if we know God, we know that we know him. Does not knowledge imply certainty? If we know any thing, do we not of necessity know that we know it? Hence, we use knowledge and certainty as meaning substantially the same thing. You say in respect to a particular fact or occurrence, “I am certain of that; I can not be mistaken; I know it.”

Now, it can not be denied that of a certain kind of knowledge we can not well be mistaken, and we need no special assurance or confirmation of it. I say with some confidence: “I know you, your face, your voice, your manner, your temperament, to some degree. I do not need any assurance that I know you in these regards.” No one needs to demonstrate that what I suppose to be

your face is really yours, and that my knowledge of you is not mere illusion, but knowledge indeed. But when I go deeper, and say: "I know not only your face, your form, and your manners, but your mind, your purposes, your thoughts, your motives, your heart," I may feel just as confident and may speak with just as much assurance, but my knowledge of you rests on a very different foundation, and is much more liable to mistake. If, for example, I am called in court to testify as to my knowledge of you I should testify with equal confidence of your identity and integrity; I should say not only that I know your face and your name, but I know your heart to be honest and true. Yet an intelligent jury would attach a great deal more weight to my testimony as to who you are, than as to what you are. They would reason that in the matter of your face and form, your outward appearance, I could not well be mistaken, whereas it is easy to be mistaken as to the heart. "Man looketh on the outward appearance." He must of necessity. He has no power to penetrate beyond that. Only God can look on the heart. We can only see the hearts of others as we see our own faces, by reflection. And the reflection of a man's heart in his conduct may be a false reflection; it must always be a very imperfect reflection. You may say, therefore, when such a man's heart has been disclosed to you in a peculiar way, not only do I know him,

but I know that I know him. "I had always thought him this; now I know that my thought of my friend was true."

Now our knowledge of the invisible God resembles our knowledge of the invisible mind of man. We cannot know him as we know his visible creation; as we know the sun, the stars and the solid earth. We can only see the invisible in these visible things, as we see the spirit of a man reflected in his conduct. The reflection is more or less dim and imperfect. But has not God made a fuller and more immediate revelation of himself in his word and, above all, in his Son? And yet how are we to know that this word is such a revelation? We believe that it is; we accept it as conveying to us a gracious and saving knowledge of him; we believe that those who delivered this word to us were carried up into such communion with him that they were enabled to receive these truths from him, and to communicate them to us. But still the question returns, How shall we know this with such absolute confidence that we can say we know that we know it? that we can rest upon it as securely and serenely as we rest upon the well established facts of history and science and experience?

Some would say that we can not rest on these two kinds of truth in the same way; that natural and spiritual things cannot be apprehended with the same degree of certainty; that faith can never

be equal to knowledge; that he that walks by faith can never proceed with the same confidence as he that walks by sight. We must walk by faith, nevertheless. We soon reach the limit of sight; then we must go on by faith or else turn back. He that will walk by sight only must walk a very short road. We have to walk by faith, of necessity, or else go nowhere. Still we can never be as certain of our road as when we walk by sight. The most we can say is that it is much more reasonable to walk by faith than not to walk at all.

This is not the view, however, which the apostles take of walking by faith. They do not represent the way of faith as an uncertain road, which one must follow only because there is no better. They do, indeed, confess that we will meet many questions along that way which we will not be able to answer. "Here," says Paul, "we know in part." But this partial knowledge is nevertheless true and real knowledge, so far as it goes. Here we see through a glass darkly; nevertheless the objects which we see so dimly, like the reflection of distant objects on a mirror, are real objects and not illusions. The gospel is compared by Peter to a lamp; a feeble light indeed, compared with the glorious sunlit regions towards which we are tending; yet it is a true light, not a will-o'-wisp. So that though we may say we do not know all about this region through which the path of faith lies,

nor all about that better country towards which it leads, yet we do know that the path is a true path and leads on to blessedness. Hear the confidence with which the Scriptures speak. Paul says, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God;" "we know that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." David speaks of the presence of God as being to him as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. The traveler through the desert often takes refuge from the scorching and blinding heat of the sun under the shadow of some rock that towers there in that solitude like an island in mid ocean. Often, too, when the deadly simoon sweeps furiously across the desert he hides him behind that rock until the storm be overpast. Seated under such a rock, sheltered from sun and storm, the servant of God was no more sure of the rock's presence than of God's presence; he knew God as truly as he knew the rock; his faith rested just as certainly and securely in the living God as his body reposed in the refuge of the rock.

How do we take the heart and the help out of such words as these by saying that David and Paul and all the rest were inspired men and had the privilege of a more immediate and assured

knowledge of God than is permitted to common men! "They indeed might not only know God, but know that they know him. We must be content with a less intimate and confident knowledge of him. They were permitted to walk by sight, in some degree at least; we must walk by faith, and therefore they might well speed on with eager and jubilant steps, but we must plod our way heavenward with slow and often faltering feet." But if I understand inspiration it means this as to its object: the apostles and prophets were not inspired for their own sakes, not simply that they might have intimate knowledge of God and constant communion with him, but rather that by inspiration they might bring others to the same intimate knowledge and the same blessed communion. They were not carried up to this height, as Moses was brought to the top of Pisgah, to view by sight the land which the multitudes at the foot of the mountain could only see by faith, that, instead of going down and leading the people up to this immediate view of Canaan they might remain there to die or make them a tabernacle and dwell there above the common lot; but they were given this higher view of heavenly things that they might communicate it to others and bring them to the same knowledge of God which they themselves enjoyed; to enable the humblest follower of Christ to say with as much confidence as Paul: "I know whom I have believed," or to

say as serenely as John? "We know that we have passed from death unto life."

I. We come, then, at length to the question: How may we know that we know God? how may we know him with a more absolute and immovable confidence?

1. There is an answer to this question that amounts to this: "We know that we know God through our memories. It is a matter of more or less vivid recollection with us. We have received the witness of the Spirit; that is, there was made upon me an inward impression, instant and indelible by which the Spirit of God bore witness to my spirit that I am a child of God." The instant of this impression can never be forgotten; it flashed through me like a shock from an electric battery. The memory of that shock is my assurance of acceptance with God. "Thereby do I know that I know him."

Or this witness of memory is sometimes given in this way: I know that I know God because he has promised to acknowledge those who obey his commandment, and I have obeyed it. I remember well the hour of my obedience; I recall the circumstance; I recollect the sincerity of my intentions, the purity of my motives, the warmth of my emotions, the peace which followed from yielding my will to the will of my Master. "Thereby do I know that I know him."

Let me seem to throw no shadow over this sacred

hour; but let me, if I would be faithful, remind you that memory can not testify to what is, but only to what was. You may say, "Hereby I know that I once knew him, because I did keep his commandment," but you cannot base your present relations to God wholly on a past experience. It is as if you should say, when asked if you know a person to whom you were introduced years ago: "Yes, I know him. I have known him for years. I remember well the circumstances and ceremony of introduction and the impression produced upon me." But surely this introduction years ago, can testify nothing of your relations to that man to-day. We could not count much on a knowledge so remote. And hence you will notice that the apostle does not speak here in the past tense and in the singular number. He does not say: "Hereby do we know that we know him, if we have kept his commandment," but "Hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." It is the habitual keeping of his commandments, the daily obedience, that becomes the seal and assurance of our knowledge of God.

II. What are some of these commandments in the keeping of which our knowledge of God is assured? There is, for example, the command to repent. Sin blinds our minds to the knowledge of God. The idolaters of Athens, groping their way after God among the altars, are not in so hopeless a case as the man who feels his way after God

with one hand, while he holds hard to his sins with the other. If you have secret sins that you will not give up, if you are guilty of sins against your own body or soul which you will not renounce, if you are wronging others either by enticing them to sin or defrauding them of their rights or taking advantage of their ignorance, their extremity, their passions and vices ; if you are only neglecting your opportunities and your obligations to your higher nature and to the higher nature of others—from all this you must turn utterly away ; of it all you must truly repent, or else you can have no more intimate knowledge of God. Rather you must lose what assurance you have and drift away into open disbelief.

Then, again, there is the commandment to acknowledge Christ. “In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths,” says the wise man in Proverbs. Christ requires open acknowledgment of all his disciples. Confession is such acknowledgment ; baptism is such ; there are continual calls to acknowledge him in daily life. We may try to conceal our relation to the Master, but if we do we shall only dissolve it. The lamp will not burn under the bushel measure. We only extinguish it if we put it there. The Christian’s life must be such a continual and open acknowledgment of Christ that all men shall know that he is Christ’s disciple. Otherwise he shall soon cease to know it himself. Mr. Moody speaks of disci-

ples who are all O. and O., meaning that they are *out and out* disciples. We must be out and out Christians or lose presently all assurance of our acceptance with Christ.

There is also the commandment to love one another which the apostle had specially in mind in these words; "Hereby we know we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Only to love the brethren is not to be possessed by strong and overpowering emotions towards them, so that as often as we see them we feel like rushing into their arms or taking them into our own. We may easily make too much of the emotional element in love. To love the brethren is to be tender-hearted, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us, being imitators of God as dear children. It is to feel an interest in the welfare of our brethren, to visit them in their affliction, to weep with those that weep and rejoice with those that rejoice; to sympathize with them in their successes as well as their failures, to applaud their virtues and overlook their faults, never losing hope or patience with the weakest or most wayward, but trusting and working, that the long suffering of God may bring them to repentance.

In Bunyan's great allegory, Christian departs from the plain road to the heavenly city and falls asleep by the way. Soon he bestirs himself and seeks to return to his pilgrimage, but finds that he

has lost his roll of assurance, his certificate of citizenship in the kingdom of heaven. There are many who have lost their roll of assurance. Some, it may be, have forged another and hope to have it accepted. Some are honestly deceived into accepting a false assurance of acceptance with God. Some go on with faltering steps, doubting if their certificate will pass them, while some have turned back, deeming it useless to pursue the way, if they have no sure hope of acceptance at the end. The only way to be sure of acceptance at the end is to be sure of acceptance at every step of the journey. The means of attaining such assurance is given in the text, "Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments."

XI.

APOSTOLIC CONFIRMATION.

“And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, and to Iconium, and to Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God. And when they had appointed for them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they had believed.”—
ACTS 14: 21-23.

WE have described in these verses a case of apostolic confirmation. And it seems necessary, or natural, at least, that in order to determine its meaning we should compare it with modern confirmation, as practiced among some most respectable and influential bodies of religious people. The comparison is not undertaken in any invidious spirit, or with any design of depreciation; but rather to make plain the meaning of this apostolic confirmation as here described.

I. Roman Catholic, Episcopal and Lutheran communions all administer what is called the rite of confirmation. As practiced by these bodies, confirmation is the laying of the bishop's hands upon the heads of baptized persons, in order to their admission to all the privileges of the church. On the part of the confirmed person it is regarded as a public renewal of his baptismal vows. On the part of the administrator it is supposed to con-

fer the rights and obligations of church membership. The Roman church exalts it to the place of a sacrament, putting it on a level with baptism, the Lord's Supper, ordination, the marriage ceremony and extreme unction. By the other communions who practice it, it is deemed of indispensable importance.

Now, without affirming or denying the propriety of such a practice here, I shall be content to remark the difference between this modern confirmation and that administered by the apostles. Indeed, there is scarcely one point of agreement between them except the name. Both the act and the design are utterly different. (1) As to the act, it lies on the surface that this apostolic confirmation was not a mere rite. It did not consist in laying holy hands on the heads of the disciples, nor any sort of pious manipulation. It was not a ceremony of any sort. It was not simply an external performance. It was a strengthening of the souls of the disciples. It was spiritual and inward in its character. What the disciples felt in this confirmation was not the pressure of the apostolic hands upon their heads, but the power of divine truth in their hearts. (2) And as the act was different from the latter-day confirmation, so was its design. It did not admit those to whom it was administered to the duties and privileges of the church, for they had already been brought into the exercise and enjoyment of these by their baptism. These were already dis-

ciples, with all the privileges and duties of disciples belonging to them and incumbent upon them. The design of this confirmation was to make them realize and esteem these privileges and discharge their duties with all courage and constancy. It was a strengthening and bracing of the souls of these newly-enlisted disciples for the conflicts of the Christian life. This, then, is the import and intent of this Christian confirmation. It is a spiritual cordial to enable the disciples to stand against the coming struggle; a reinforcement of the soul in anticipation of the battle.

II. *The need of confirmation.* I want to insist now on the need of this spiritual confirmation, not only for the first disciples and the apostolic age, but for all disciples in every age. This need of moral strengthening, especially in the early stages of Christian life, will appear from these three considerations at least: (1) In becoming a disciple of Christ a man makes the world his enemy, and he needs to be strengthened against that. (2) In becoming a Christian the natural enmity of the heart against God is not destroyed, but only subdued; he needs to be strengthened against this enemy within. (3) In becoming a Christian there is a certain exaltation and enthusiasm of spirit which will presently be followed by reaction. He needs support for that moral and spiritual reaction which always follows spiritual exaltation. In the light

of the history of these disciples as we have it in this chapter, consider each of these points:

(1) In becoming disciples these people had made the world their enemy. Go back in the story and see how this appears. The apostles, sent out as missionaries from Antioch in Syria, had come in their course to Antioch in Pisidia. Visiting the Jewish synagogue on the Sabbath they were invited to speak, and they told the story of Jesus. The first effect was agreeable. They saw little to fear at first in this simple and tender story, and were beseeching the apostles as they went out of the synagogue that it be told them again. But soon they began to see its meaning, and resisted it. The Jews were the first to take offense. With characteristic shrewdness, they saw that if this story were credited, Jewish prestige and pride must go. In telling this story the apostles had made the Jews their enemies. They raised an uproar and drove them out of the city. Going to the neighboring city of Iconium they experienced the same treatment. So they came down into these obscurer and more retired places off from the main road, inhabited almost entirely by Gentiles, and again were favorably and enthusiastically received at first. But soon these Gentiles found out, by the aid of some malicious Jews who had followed the track of the apostles, that this gospel was as much opposed to Gentile idolatry as to Jewish bigotry, and straightway another and almost fatal assault

upon them followed. Because the apostles attacked the sins of the world, the world had become their enemy.

Now to become a Christian is to do as these apostles did—to attack the bigotry and idolatry of the world, its sins, its ideals, its standards. It was a very simple thing these men had done—believed, repented, confessed, received baptism—but in doing that they had pledged themselves to wage incessant warfare against the idolatry of the world and all its sins. And the world would visit its opposition upon them as it had already visited it upon the apostles. They should be persecuted, as indeed they were in a few years, hunted like wild beasts through all this country. To encounter this opposition they would need to be strengthened.

This same thing holds true to-day. Christianity has not changed in its opposition to these things; and though the world has changed, it has not by any means renounced all its idolatry. To be a Christian is to wage war upon this with all that it includes. The world will repel the attack, if not by persecution, then by some other means. We need to be strengthened to resist and overcome the world, need it as much to-day as ever. How many a man makes a bold beginning, only to weaken after a short struggle!

(2) Our greatest foe, however, in this struggle, is not without, but within. The old idolatry within us is not dead; it is only in subjection. We need

to fight to keep it in subjection. This is illustrated in the case of these disciples. The Jewish converts would have to fight that narrow, intolerant spirit which still remained after conversion. The devil of bigotry, though subdued, was not yet cast out. The Gentile disciple must contend against that old love of the vices and lusts of his idolatry. Every idolatrous festival would awaken his slumbering lusts, as the cry of the wild beasts arouses the beast in his cage. How fully and vividly Paul describes the enemy within. Speaking of the Greek athlete, he says his greatest obstacle to success is himself, not his competitor. He must be temperate; he must restrain his passions; he must hold his body in subjection. So was the struggle in his own life. Again, in Rom. 7, what a chapter of internal struggle! How true is that picture to life! to every aspiring man's experience! That same struggle that went on at Lystra, Derbe, Rome, is going on here. How we need to be strengthened for the fight! For the fight is a good fight, but oh, how hard at times!

(3) Our need of strengthening arises again out of that spiritual reaction which is sure to follow our enlistment in the Christian warfare. There is always a certain degree of excitement in enlistment. The music, the pomp, the pageantry, the streaming banners and shining uniforms, the example of others, the impassioned appeals to patriotism, the greatness of the cause—all contribute to

carry us away with the occasion. But when the dreary march begins, when the long, weary way opens before us, when the trumpet sounds to battle, and when this battle is so often a single, hand-to-hand, life and death combat, reaction sets in. So it is of all beginning, whether beginning school, or beginning business, or beginning life. It is easy to begin and easy to go on till the reaction of will, and revulsion of feeling come.

So it must have been with these Christians at Lystra. In the first glow of their faith, and love, and zeal, when they first heard the gospel and witnessed the accompanying miracles, they were ready for anything. Even Paul's persecution did not dismay them; they stood about the half-dead apostle ready to die with him. But presently, when the apostle should leave them, and they should be left to stem this dark tide of heathenism without the inspiration of his example and the encouragement of his presence, they must have weakened, and then they needed support. So it was of the Galatians. When Paul was with them they were ready to pluck out their eyes in love of him and his message. But on his departure their love grows cold and they almost lose faith in their former teacher and his great lesson. So it is with us. In times of revival we sing —

“Through floods and flames if Jesus lead,
I'll follow where he goes,”

but later on we change our tune, and our words no longer ring with resolution and confidence.

Then comes the need of confirmation. If in this time of reaction the soul is not supported and strengthened, it shall surely yield to the great assault.

III. *The Means of Confirmation.* We turn now to enquire by what means the apostles strengthened the souls of the disciples against these foes without and within.

1. Instruction. They instructed them in the great law of conflict. It is through much tribulation that we enter the kingdom of God. Only as one is grounded in that great law is he prepared and panoplied for the great struggle. It is not an accident or an incident; it is a necessity. "We *must* through much tribulation enter the kingdom." Now the necessity for the conflict comes of two reasons. (1) It arises first in the necessary antagonism between the spirit of the world and the spirit of Christ. Look out into the Jewish world and see those little Christian communities planted here and there in its midst. See what is the aim of this Jewish world and what is its spirit, and see how it contrasts with the aim and spirit of these Christian churches. The spirit of the Jew was exclusive. He accounted himself the favorite of God, and every one else common and unclean. "Come not near, for I am holier than thou," was the meaning of all his actions. His aim was to

exalt the Jew, and his hope was for a Jewish empire which should make all the heathen tributary. How different the aim of the church; to make men not Jews, but Christians, servants of Christ and servants of one another in his name. Between these two, conflict is inevitable. Or look at these same communities in the Roman world, and contrast them in aim, in spirit and in life. There could not but be conflict. It is because Paul discerns the difference so clearly that he says, "it must be." Compare the spirit of Christ and the spirit of the true disciple with the spirit of the modern world. Pride, self-complacency—this is great Babylon, this is our spirit. Our aim is self-aggrandizement, self-indulgence, self-glorification. The church is the opposite of this; we must have a conflict. The carnal mind will contest every step of our progress heavenward. Jesus said, in this world ye must have tribulations. How could it be otherwise when we contemplate the spirit of the world and the spirit of Christ? (2) But in the second place we must have tribulation for our own sake. The perfection of our character demands it. It is only through this that we are fitted for the kingdom of God. The word *tribulation* illustrates this necessity. The whole earth abounds in instances and illustrations of this law of conflict. Every thing good, every thing substantial, every thing precious and enduring has come to us through much tribulation. The rock on

which our houses repose is the product of those fierce forces which played upon our earth in other ages. The oaken beams which support them have been nursed in years if not centuries of conflict, rocked from their very infancy in the cradle of the storm. The boards which enclose us have their strength and toughness through long conflict with the forces of nature. The bricks have come to you through the fire. All the precious metals must be submitted to the furnace and the crucible. The diamond must be polished in its own dust.

Shall we expect, then, that the most substantial, most precious, most enduring, most beautiful and glorious of all things, that consummate creation, should come to us without effort and without struggle? God hath predestined us to be conformed to the image of his Son. Christlikeness is our destined end. But to be made like him, is not this to be fashioned anew, not in body merely, but in mind and spirit? We are to be made over again, to be transformed little by little to this perfect and glorious pattern. But is not this transforming process a painful one? Must it not mean conflict and suffering and long struggle? We are like creatures deformed, whose limbs must be twisted back to their original shape and comeliness, and whose organs must be diligently and painfully exercised until they attain to their normal functions. Christ is the perfect pattern of manhood; and we are to be conformed to him at whatever cost and pain.

After that we shall be ready for his kingdom. It was by instructing the disciples in this great law of conflict that the apostles confirmed their souls.

2. But not by this alone were these disciples strengthened in soul and prepared for the coming struggle. By organization as well as instruction these disciples were confirmed. Not only exhorting them to continue in the faith and instructing them in the law of conflict, but in ordaining elders in every church did the apostles strengthen and confirm the disciples. The churches were organized and officered for instruction and work, and so were strengthened. They were not left alone, without leading and guidance, each man to struggle on alone as best he could, but were provided with spiritual rulers and guides, who should be at once instructors and examples for them all.

We may note some of the most important items respecting these elders or bishops of the church.

1. Their qualifications for office. These were natural and spiritual.

(1) First among these natural qualifications is the ability or aptness to teach. Timothy is charged by Paul to commit the things which he had learned of him to faithful men who should be able to teach others also. Ability to teach implies, first, knowledge, and then the talent of imparting it. The elder should always be the best informed man in the congregation.

(2) Another natural qualification was the abil-

ity to rule, which should be demonstrated by the wise rule of his own family, before the man is given rule in the church. There is no place where rule is more difficult, and requires greater wisdom and piety, than in the family, and when one is proven faithful to that trust, he may be called wisely to the higher trust of the church.

(3) A third natural qualification is experience; not experience of the duties of this particular office, of course, but experience of life, that contact with life which bestows wisdom, which teaches moderation and which develops in men the virtues of charity and kindness. The apostle expressly forbids a novice in this office, because, however good and worthy his intentions, his inexperience disqualifies him for the grave and delicate duties of the eldership. I heard of an elder in an adjoining state who stands at the church door with a cudgel in one hand and a theological shibboleth in the other, and whoever can not or will not pronounce his shibboleth is brained, metaphorically only, on the spot. The man's intentions are probably good, but he doesn't know anything. He was put in this place without any experience of the world or of life. He is an unscriptural elder.

Coming to the moral and spiritual qualifications, we find them outlined in the epistles to Timothy and Titus. Among the chief are these: (1) The ambition of spiritual service. "If any man desireth the office of bishop, he desireth a good

work." The office is one to be desired. But the apostle goes on to show why it is to be desired; not for the mere honor of office or the love of power or the ambition to rule, but because of the opportunities for doing good, for serving the kingdom of God, which it offers. Paul does not rebuke the desire; does not say, as we sometimes do, that a man ought to have no ambition for office, but it ought to be a generous, unselfish, spiritual ambition. That, so far from being an obstacle, is a qualification for office.

(2) Then, a bishop should be a man of character, not a man of gross and glaring inconsistencies, but a blameless man; not a carnal, self-indulgent, intemperate man, but sober, self-controlled, dignified; not noisy and contentious, but patient and conciliatory; not sordid, self-seeking, greedy of his own gain, but generous, disinterested, devoted; a man honored and beloved of his children, respected of his neighbors, without any grave reproach from any. This is indeed an ideal standard, and we can no more expect to find an ideal bishop than an ideal Christian. None of us have attained to perfection as yet. But every man who essays to be a ruler and teacher in the church should keep this ideal continually in view. Concerning the ordination of these elders to office, the Scriptures indicate that it was done by a solemn laying on of hands and prayer in the presence and by the consent and with the co-operation

of the church. I do not understand this ordination as constituting one an elder. He is constituted by his own qualifications and by the call of providence and the church. But it is a public and significant acknowledgment of the authority and sacredness of his office. The church in laying on hands publicly acknowledges his right to teach and rule, confers its approval of his choice of his office and his selection to it by his brethren. Thus ordination, while it adds no grace to the ordained, adds dignity and honor to the office, and so supports the man who enters it by the sympathy and approval of the church. This is in strict accordance with the teaching of the New Testament, which everywhere inculcates respect for office and reverence for those who have the rule over us. The one great duty of the eldership is the duty of discipline. I know there are some elders who will agree with that statement, who have a very different idea from mine of its meaning. Discipline is not simply excommunication, though this is the too general view of it. Excommunication either means the failure of discipline or else a very extraordinary measure of discipline. Following the figure of Paul, we may say there are two great things in the salvation of a soul; first, his planting in Christ; second, his training up in his service. The first of these duties belongs to the evangelist, the second to the elder or pastor. One plants, the other trains. Both of these things are to be done

faithfully, if God is to give the increase; increase not in numbers only, but in character. The need of training is indispensable. The young vine no more needs training than the young disciple. He would not be counted a wise man who destroyed his young vines because they would not climb the trellis of their own accord. What folly is it, then, to punish the young disciple because he does not grow without training. What we need is not scolding nor coaxing, but training in the knowledge and service of Christ.

Three means of training. First, Teaching. There must be knowledge of duty. Ignorance is the first obstacle to growth. The disciple needs to be instructed in the laws of God and the laws of life.

Second, Counsel. Advice is cheap, we say; but good advice, given in a fatherly, friendly spirit is rare—Jonathan's strengthening David's hand in God. Often the disciple is tempted to let go his hold on God, and needs to be strengthened by kindly counsel.

Third, Example. A man may not be an able or eloquent teacher, but the great thing is for him to exemplify his teaching. When an old man rose in the meeting and said we ought to deal honestly with our neighbors and love one another, somebody sneered, "He is always saying that." "Yes," was the answer, "and he is always doing it, too!"

No worthier tribute could have been paid him. The bishop must walk worthy of his great vocation.

So it was that the apostles confirmed the souls of the disciples. They instructed them in the law of conflict, they provided them with spiritual rulers and guides. And the result was that these disciples stood firm and strong against all the assaults of their enemies. Both the synagogue and the Roman senate made war on them. Jews stirred up the Romans against them. Cæsar became jealous of Christ. But they stood the test. These spiritual captains led their followers against the legions of Rome and won the day. The Roman eagles encountered the cross of Christ; the Roman met the Galilean in mortal combat, and the Galilean conquered.

XII.

THE CREDIBILITY OF MIRACLES.

“ Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him.”—JOHN 3: 2.

DETOCQUEVILLE’S dictum, that every discourse should begin with some incontrovertible proposition, is very difficult of application to the subject of miracles, for the reason that scarcely any statement regarding them is outside of the region of controversy. Is there such a thing as a miracle? What is a miracle, if there be such? What is its design and what is its importance, either as an element or evidence of divine revelation?—all these are questions of grave debate not only between believers and unbelievers, but likewise among various schools of apologists or defenders of the Christian faith.

Much of the prevailing opposition to miracles is pure prejudice. The very word has become offensive to what is called the scientific spirit of the age. The temper of the time in which we live largely disqualifies us from a faithful consideration of the subject. Truth has contended long, and suffered much from the *odium theologicum*, and the contention has not yet ceased. To this hour the advocate of unpopular, and it may be, forgotten

religious truth, is often silenced if we can fix upon him the suspicion of heresy. But it is more the fashion now to assail truth with the same weapon from an opposite and unexpected quarter, to excite against it the *odium scientificum* or *philosophicum*. As it was a daring thing in other days to propound any truth which could not be fitly framed into some system of religious philosophy, however plainly it might be read in Holy Writ, so to-day it is hardly less hazardous to own for truth anything which may not be easily reconciled with the reigning rationalism. Which only proves that human nature, whatever changes have taken place in its philosophy, is pretty much the same as ever, and is still ready, as of old time, to substitute dogma for reason and odium for argument. "He that addresses himself to the task of proving the possibility of miracles to our age," says Prof. Bruce, "must approach the subject under a feeling of discouragement. The advocate of miracles is very conscious in these days that he argues against the current of contemporary opinion. The oracles, scientific, literary, philosophic, pronounce against them. Matthew Arnold declares that the human mind is turning away from miracles. Dr. Strauss decrees that the miracle must take itself off. M. Renan announces that the whole body of modern science yields this immense result, that there is no supernatural." Miracles, these oracles will allow, may be harmless and even beautiful

conceits; but they are all conceits, the crude creations of an innocent and infant age. Our modern maturity of mind repudiates them.

These certainly are sweeping and high-sounding utterances. But please get your breath again and observe that they are only utterances, not arguments; only assumptions and assertions for which no proof is presented or even proposed. This modern mind, this scientific spirit, this current contemporary opinion simply prejudges the case and decides adversely before the argument is heard; declares, indeed, that there is no case and pronounces the very idea irrational and absurd. Having assumed that a miracle is impossible, it turns this assumption into an axiom, and gravely declares that every appearance of argument for the truth of miracles is necessarily delusive. That is to say, this scientific prejudice, reverses the rational and logical method, and instead of judging the conclusion by the argument, judges the argument by the conclusion. Dogmatism in any cause is odious, but when it masquerades in the smooth and plausible phrases of science, it is simply insufferable. Bigotry is never so baneful as when it passes for philosophy.

If we consider the nature of a miracle we may see the cause of this philosophic prejudice against miracles, and also the unreasonableness of it. What, then, is a miracle? It is the overcoming of a natural law by a supernatural cause. Not the

suspension of law, for the law continues to operate even while the miracle is working. Thus a stone hurled from a human hand into the air overcomes for a certain time and to a certain height the law of gravitation, which tends to draw and hold the stone to the earth, and, operates just as powerfully while the stone is going upward as in its descent. But another law above this law of gravitation and stronger than it, the law of volition, has overcome it for the time, and wrought effects in the world in spite of its operation. A miracle implies that there is a supernatural world above the natural, which at certain periods of history has inserted itself into the natural and overcome for the moment the operation of some of its laws. It does not imply that a supernatural agent descends into the natural world and overturns the natural order, but that such an agent overcomes, for the time being, the operation of some natural law and produces results that never could have been produced if the law were left to take its course. Thus the miracle of Christ's walking on the water does not show that Christ abolished, for the time being, the law of gravitation so that he had no tendency to sink, but that by a superior and supernatural exertion of his will he overcame that law, and its operation was in vain. And it was because his own will was joined by faith to the will of his Master, and the miraculous energy of that will was transferred to him, that Peter was able

to walk amid the waves for a moment. When faith failed, the connection was broken and the timid disciple, no longer able to overcome the law which was drawing him downward, began to sink.

Now why should this conception of a miracle be offensive to the modern mind? Chiefly for this reason, that it has in it an element of mystery. We can not discern or explain to our satisfaction how or why this supernatural cause intrudes itself into the natural world and overcomes its laws. The mystery of the thing is an offense to us. Because our science has dissipated some of the things which were once regarded as mysterious, or at least dissipated some of our ignorance regarding these mysteries, therefore we are become somewhat impatient and intolerant of all mysteries. The modern prejudice against miracles is largely a prejudice against mystery. The thunderbolt was once regarded as a miracle and a mystery. It was thought to be flung direct from the hand of the Almighty to avenge his anger upon his enemies. It was the flash of his eye and the voice of his wrath. It carried terror and dismay to the untutored mind of man. Our philosophy has made us wiser. We know that the lightning blaze is nothing but so much incandescent air, identical in nature with the little flame that flickers from our candle; and that the thunder is simply the concussion of air currents whose principle is precisely that of a boy's popgun. The earthquake was once

regarded as a miracle. The heaving, belching fires were supposed to shoot up from the very abyss of hell. We know better now, and refer these things to their appropriate causes. Meteors are no longer falling stars, but fragments flung from far off worlds. The discovery of such things has somewhat inflamed our vanity; our knowledge of second causes has made us forget our ignorance of the great First Cause and blinded us to the truths that lie outside of phenomena and beyond the reach of the telescope.

But let us remember one thing when the mystery of a miracle offends us, namely, that our science has brought in more mysterious things than it has cast out; it has demonstrated more mysteries than it has dissipated. The lightning, for example, is in some respects a more mysterious thing, now that we have learned a little about it, than ever before. The flashing, flaming air and the pealing thunder—what makes these? An electric current, we say, which dashes with inconceivable speed through the heavens. What is that current? It is identical with that which flashes over the wires along our streets. Beyond this we know nothing of the electric current. We have what we call hypotheses to explain its effect, but *hypotheses* is only a mild, modern word for assumption, a sort of garment which we borrow from the Greeks to cover the nakedness of our ignorance. This electric current is still an inscrutable mystery.

And the whole tendency of our modern thought is not to make way with mysteries, but to multiply them. What words are oftener on our lips than these, *substance, cause, force, space?* And yet they are all mysteries which appear the more deeply mysterious the more we ponder them. We can not hunt them down in the dictionaries nor corner them in the text-books. They baffle all the arts of explanation and transcend all the powers of human conception. These are words that simply defy definition.

There are three miracles in nature which are as stupendous as any recorded in revelation. And the science which shuts us up to the acceptance of these can not consistently deny the truth of the gospel miracles. There is the miracle of matter, the miracle of life and the miracle of mind. First, the miracle of matter. Nature exists. But has it always existed? Is matter eternal? or did it cause itself? Did the vast something spring from a vast nothing? The wildest evolutionist does not pretend that from nothing something may be evolved. He contends that the great may be developed by gradual process from the small, but never has he dared to say that something may be developed from nothing. The world must have had a beginning, and however minute that beginning may have been, it was a real beginning. Things cannot begin themselves. Now this beginning of matter was a miracle. That is, there is no other rational

explanation of it. Neither science nor philosophy proposes any solution of it. There is no solution but that it began in the creative will of God. It had a miraculous beginning.

Then comes the miracle of life. "It is a fact as sure as the law of gravitation, that life can come only from life," was said before the most learned assembly in the world, the British Association, by its president. The idea of spontaneous generation is absurd in itself. Who can think that a stone would ever come to life even if a million of years were given it to accomplish the task. And it is an utterly exploded idea among the teachers of science. If any thing may be said to be settled beyond all controversy and cavil, it is that only life can produce life. When you have accounted for matter by natural causes, if such a thing were possible, the problem of life would still remain unsolved. Whence began life? Who made the difference between the pebble and the acorn, between the stone and the moss which grows upon it? There is no accounting for this difference but by confessing that the origin of life is a miracle. And now, when you have matter and life, can these two bring forth mind? Can the tree learn to think? Leave the vegetable to itself a thousand years; let the cabbage head grow and develop itself through long ages—can it ever come to reason and think as does the human head? Can life generate thought? There may be brain in the brute, but

that brute did not derive its brain and power of thought, whatever it may be, from some form of life that had no brain. And that sense of obligation and responsibility which distinguishes man from the brute, and really constitutes him an intelligent being, in the true sense a thinking being—whence could originate this peculiar power of thought, but in the miraculous gift of the Almighty? Here, then, the study of science reveals to us these three things, of which we can give absolutely no account, but to say that they were caused by some power outside and above the laws of nature. The origin of matter, the origin of life, and the origin of mind—these three things, according to the confession of the soundest science, were necessarily miraculous. They could not have been but for the direct operation of the divine will.

But if we admit these miracles, why should we account all other miracles incredible? If the origination of life and the origination of thought are sufficient occasions for God to interfere in the order of nature, why may there not be other occasions for the operation of the same miraculous power? If God desires to give to the world spiritual truth and spiritual life, and to that end must incarnate himself in the person of his Son, and authenticate his mission as well as reveal his character by means of miracles, and crown all by his resurrection from the grave, why should it be thought a thing incredible with us that God should raise the

dead, or perform any wonderful work which might serve this gracious end? Rather, is it not far more credible and natural to suppose that God who introduced life into the world by miracle and who made the living being also a thinking and responsible being, by the same extraordinary means did also at sundry times and in divers portions reveal his truth to man by means of miracles? Do not these original miracles make not only credible but probable the miracles which revelation records?

XIII.

WHAT IS IT TO BE A DISCIPLE?

Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.—**MATT.** 28: 19, 20.

So therefore whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.—**LUKE** 14: 33.

Jesus therefore said to those Jews which had believed him, If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.—**JOHN** 8: 31.

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.—**JOHN** 13: 35.

Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; and so shall ye be my disciples —**JOHN** 15: 8.

AMONG the names by which the followers of Jesus are called in the New Testament, the chief are these: Believers, saints, brethren, disciples and Christians. And though it may be said with truth of many names that there is nothing in them, especially some that it is fashionable to give children in these days, it cannot be said that there is nothing in these Bible names. There are volumes of significance in them. If we will keep a clear apprehension of them we cannot get very far away from the truth. On the contrary, as we disuse those, substitute other meanings for them, pervert their meaning, we cut loose from our true moorings. For example: How do we lose our liberty? Not so much by disusing the word as by perverting its meaning. Liberty is made the enemy of law

when really it is the child of law. It is made to be identical with license when in fact it is the opposite of license, the only safeguard against it. So despotism and anarchy both prosper by this perversion of liberty. Another example: Trade is demoralized not by disusing the words "buying and selling," but by misusing them. They must imply a real purchase, a delivery of the goods, but in present parlance they mean nothing of the sort. So speculation has come to mean peculation, and right dealing has given place to robbery.

The New Testament words have a definite significance, which we must clearly understand and closely follow. Take those names referred to—believers, saints, brethren, Christians, disciples. What is the meaning of each? *Believers* shows what is the foundation and the ruling principle of our religion. It is faith. That is the foundation, the guide, the light. Not philosophy, not fancy, not knowledge, but faith, the definite and specific faith in Jesus as the Son of God. When we lose faith we cease to be Christians. *Saints* describes the character and the obligation of Christians—to be separate, holy, single-minded, not emaciated, contemplative ascetics, whose knees are stiff from long standing in prayer. *Brethren* describes our relation to each other in virtue of our common relation to God and Christ, and our duty in consequence. So far as we fail here we fail to follow Christ. *Christians* describes our entire subjec-

tion to Christ and his ownership of us. It was perhaps applied first by the world, and shows what was the first impression made by Christians upon the world—those who *belonged* to Christ owned an unseen Master, a dead man whom they believed to be alive.

But I want especially to speak of the term “disciple,” and to show who are the true disciples. First, a remark or two on the significance and suggestiveness of the word. There are at least three ideas implied in the word disciple—humility, docility, progress.

1. A true disciple is one who sits at the feet of his teacher, thus owning and confessing his need of knowledge. To call one's self a disciple is to confess one's ignorance, just as to enter school is to confess ignorance, and ignorance of those things in which we most need knowledge—God, man, duty, destiny. Such humility is the condition of all knowledge. Socrates explained his wisdom by saying, “All that I know is that I know nothing.” So Paul, in 1 Cor. 8: 2. The Ethiopian had the true spirit of a disciple when he confessed his ignorance: “How should I understand, except some one teach me?” “God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace unto the humble.”

2. Disciple implies docility; *i. e.*, desire and willingness to know. “I don't know” is the great confession of our age. This is the age of agnosticism. But do you care to know? Do you not

rather delight in your ignorance? "I don't know and I don't care." Is not that the spirit? Many actually boast of their ignorance of divine things. The true disciple desires to know, and therefore he can be taught. He seeks for wisdom as for silver, and searches for her as for choice gold. Therefore he finds her. Two men may be equally conscious of ignorance, but this consciousness may beget a very different spirit in each. In one it may breed indifference; in the other a hunger and thirst for knowledge. The last is a true disciple.

3. Disciple implies progress. The apostle speaks of some who are ever learning and never coming to a knowledge of the truth. Such were the Athenians. They spent their time in nothing else but to tell or to hear some *new* thing. What they learned one day they unlearned the next. They changed their minds as often as they did their clothes. There be such now, who take up with every novelty that comes along and retain nothing. Then there are others who get as far as the alphabet and stop. They can recite a few familiar texts, a few stock arguments, a few points of doctrine, and there their progress ends. They need to heed the Apostle Peter and grow in knowledge. They need to go on to perfection.

The True Disciple Described.

1. He is one who is joined to Christ by faith and obedience. Matt. 28: 19, 20. This is the

divine direction to make disciples. They were first to be instructed as to the person, mission and glory of Christ in order to have faith in him. This faith was then to be declared in baptism. This baptism was not an act by itself. It was a declaration of faith and subjection to Christ, and a pledge of future obedience. When the person in this way declared Christ to be his sovereign, Christ in the same act acknowledged him to be his subject by granting to him remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit, by which he became vitally united to him. This law still holds. In order to be Christ's disciples we must accept him in all his offices by faith and obedience.

2. The true disciple is one who bears a supreme devotion to Christ. Luke 14: 33. This is exceedingly plain and strong. It is not forsake, indeed, for we do not always have to do that; but *renounce* all claim to what we have. Note the context. Great multitudes following Jesus, all claiming to be his disciples. He turns to them and explains what it is to be a disciple. If any man hate not everything that comes between his soul and his Savior he cannot be his disciple. He may try. But he will be like a man trying to build without counting cost, like a king going to war without considering the strength of his enemy. He will be like salt without savor, good for nothing, cast out and trodden under the foot of men.

3. The true disciple must not only have supreme

love for the Savior, but like love for his brethren, his fellow disciples. Jno. 13: 35. You will note three or four things here. (1) The reason of our love. Not because the object is lovable and attractive. That is true, but we are not always able to see it. Not because those whom we love have done us some great kindness. This may not be. Not because we hope for love in return. But because they are disciples of Christ, wear his name, bear his image and are loved by him. We love them because we love Christ and because he loved them. (2) Note the manner of this love. "As Christ loved us." He loved us in spite of our faults; he loved us when we loved not him; he loved us so that he gave his life for us. So ought we to lay down our lives for the brethren. Some men are doing it. Giving time, money, interest, prayer for church. More ought to do it. (3) Effect of this love. "All men shall know that ye are my disciples." This is the kind of union that convinces and converts the world; the union for which Christ prayed. So the church won its way in the beginning. So it lost it in its progress. "See how these Christians love one another" became, "See how these Christians hate one another." (4) This love is not simply an emotion but a disposition to do good as one has opportunity.

4. A disciple, indeed, is one who bears much fruit. Jno. 15: 8. (1) What is meant by fruit? Turn to a well-known passage in Gal. 5: 22, 23.

We are not only to bear these things but bear them abundantly. (2) Consider how our fruit-bearing is conditioned on our abiding in Christ the vine. We must be united with him. We must maintain the union. "Without me ye can be nothing." If ye bear no fruit ye shall be cut off. (3) The necessity of fruitfulness. We are not mere ornamental trees, shade trees—but fruit trees; not upas trees, not cumberers of the ground.

5. The true disciple is one who continues in the word of God. (1) He does not only begin; he continues. It is easy to begin. How many will begin the year fairly! but to go on through is the rub. "Beginnings are alike, it is ends which differ. One drop falls, lasts, dries up—but a drop. Another begins a river." The reward is not to those who begin, but who by steadfast and patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor. (2) This continuance must be in the word of truth and the way which truth directs. Not in sin or in error, or in ignorance or sloth. (3) Rewards: Knowledge—"Ye shall know the truth." It is the thing we hunger for—to know. We are so compassed about by ignorance. Freedom: There is no freedom but by this way. Other ways open to us and promise freedom, but they do not bestow it. Freedom is that state of character in which one can wander the wide universe through without doing harm or receiving it. This comes by persevering in the word of Christ.

Conclusion: Let us resolve to be disciples indeed, not desire it merely, but resolve it. Let us prove worthy of that legend which we have placed at the door of this building: Church of Christ—Disciples. Let us not only embrace the truth but continue in it, that we may know the truth and be made free by it; let the fruit of the Spirit abound in our lives; let us show to all men that we are true disciples of Christ by loving one another; let the love of Christ constrain us to renounce all for his sake and use ourselves and our possessions as stewards of his manifold grace. And, oh, ye who profess regard for the name of Christ, and who give great evidence of that regard by your presence among us to-day, know ye not that regard for Christ, admiration for Christ, association with the friends of Christ, does not suffice to make a true disciple. You must be joined to him by faith and obedience. You must take his yoke upon you and learn of him. Wherefore do you call him Lord, Lord, and do not the things which he bids? Obey his word and continue in it that you may be his disciples indeed.

XIV.

AGAINST INFANT BAPTISM.

“For ye are all sons of God, through faith in Jesus Christ. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ. There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female: for ye all are one in Christ Jesus.—GAL. 3: 26-28.

THE Epistle of Paul to the Galatians is one of the earliest of his Epistles, and shows us how soon the conflict between the Jewish and the Christian conception of salvation broke out in the church. The Jewish conception of salvation is substantially this: that salvation comes to men by reason of their relation to two persons, Abraham and Moses, a fleshly relation to Abraham and a legal relation to Moses. The Jew looked forward to a great salvation through the coming of the Messiah. In order to have part in that salvation it was necessary to prove two things; first, that he was a descendant of Abraham to whose seed that salvation was promised; and, second, that he was a faithful observer of the law of Moses.

The thing which a devout Jew would be most careful to establish first of all was that he was a true son of Abraham. This he would do, if possible, from the sacred records of the nation in which the descent of his family was recorded from immemorial time. But a still more convincing

proof was that he bore upon his body the mark of circumcision which revealed and demonstrated his sonship to Abraham. And the strict practice of circumcision was chiefly on this account, that the circumcised person might thus carry about with him the indisputable proof of his sonship to father Abraham. But what of those who were not blood descendants of Abraham? Was there no salvation for them? They, too, might become partakers of this hope of salvation through Abraham provided they submitted to circumcision and so became engrafted upon the Abrahamic stock, and were thus adopted into the family of Abraham. So to the proselyte circumcision was first a door by which he entered into the family of Abraham, and then a sign and a proof of his membership in that family.

But a mere fleshly relationship to Abraham did not of itself suffice to secure salvation. Circumcision bound the person receiving it to keep the law of Moses, and on those two, descent from the loins of Abraham and obedience to the law of Moses, depended the salvation of the soul.

Now the Christian conception of salvation is, of course, utterly different from this. It makes salvation depend not upon flesh, but upon faith. It requires no other relation to Abraham than this, that we imitate the faith of Abraham. If we have Abraham's faith we are heirs according to the promise made to Abraham, which is simply a

promise made to faith. Abraham is a type of all true believers to the end of time. Those who exercise his faith shall enter into fellowship with him, though they have none of his blood in their veins nor bear the mark of circumcision by which his faith was sealed.

Nor is it necessary in order to our salvation that we sustain any other relation to Moses than that we keep those two great commandments on which all the law and the prophets depend—to love God with all our hearts and our neighbor as ourselves. Those particular statutes which made up the law of Moses are no longer binding on us.

This was the issue between Paul and those Judaizing teachers who had followed him through the churches of Galatia and sought to refute his doctrine and undo his work. They sought to bring the Galatian Christians into a fleshly relationship to Abraham through the rite of circumcision, and to bring them into bondage to Moses through binding the Jewish law upon them. Paul tells them, when he writes back to them on hearing of the work of those Judaizers, that their salvation does not depend on any fleshly relation to Abraham or any legal relation to Moses, but on their personal spiritual relation to Christ. Ye are all the children of God, not through Abraham or Moses, but through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, expressed your personal faith in Christ by baptism,

have put on Christ. The old fleshly distinctions are done away in him. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise, the promise made to Abraham, namely, that in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.

Now could there be a more distinct repudiation of all claims to membership in the church which are based on fleshly considerations, and all practices which are justified by consideration of flesh? Take the practice of Infant Baptism. What is the ground on which that is based? One of the grounds, and the only one which I will notice to-day, is this: that infants are members of the Christian Church in virtue of the faith of their parents, and, as members of the church, or "children of the covenant," as the phrase goes, are entitled to the seal of the covenant, which is baptism. That is, in plain English, in virtue of their blood relation to their Christian parents, children are entitled to be baptized, just as in virtue of their blood relation to their parents, Jewish children were entitled to be circumcised. But Paul says you are not the children of God by blood, but by faith. Could this language be addressed to a church, a part of whom were incapable of exercis-

ing faith in Christ Jesus? "You are *all* the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus."

In harmony with this Scripture is the whole tenor of the New Testament. The member of Christ's church becomes such and remains such by the exercise of a personal faith. Take the great law for admission of members into the church. How does it read? "Go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." The apostles are not sent simply to baptize people, but to make disciples, or learners, of them, of teach them what Christ has commanded. Surely such teaching implies ability to learn on the part to those taught, and therefore cannot apply to infants. Still more explicit is the commission as given in Mark, where we read, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Here baptism is joined to faith and depends upon faith; without faith it would not be baptism. Its voluntary character is essential to its validity. I recently heard a somewhat startling objection to this view of the case. It was said if baptism depends on faith, and only believers should be baptized, then we must say also that faith is essential to salvation, and only believers will be saved. That is, if this text denies infant baptism it also denies infant salvation. For it connects faith with salvation just as truly as with baptism. To which

it is sufficient to reply that the kind of salvation contemplated in this text, *i. e.*, pardon of personal sin, is denied to infants, for the simple reason that they do not need it. They have no personal sins from which to be saved, and therefore do not need the personal faith and baptism on which such salvation depends.

The very names by which Christians are described in the New Testament show that infants are not included in the church. Christians are called believers. We read in Acts 5: 14, "Believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." They are also called saints, those who have separated themselves from sin and dedicated themselves to the service of God, which could only be said of responsible beings. They are called disciples, that is, pupils or learners in the school of Christ. They are called brethren, those who are capable of exercising love one to another. None of those terms would be appropriate to describe a church made up largely of unconscious and irresponsible infants.

Not only are the antecedents of baptism such as exclude infants from that ordinance, but the utter silence of Scripture on the subject is equally against it. Nowhere in all the New Testament is there the faintest allusion to the subject, the slightest authority for the practice. Challenge those who practice it to produce one proof-text

from the New Testament in its favor, and they are altogether unable to do it. The nearest approach to it is in our Lord's words, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." There is not the remotest reference to baptism in that or to the membership of children in the church. Christ does not say here, as he is sometimes represented, that the kingdom of heaven is made up of little children, that of these is the kingdom of heaven, but of *such* as these, *i. e.*, of those who have the childlike spirit, is the kingdom of heaven composed.

We are told that though there is no command for infant baptism, there is evidence that the apostles practiced it, for they baptized whole households. Now if households always contained infants, this argument would be conclusive. But how many households in this community have no babies in them. I have baptized whole households repeatedly, though I never baptize infants. We are told that the household of Lydia, the household of the jailer and the household of Stephanas were baptized, and the inference is that there were infants in these households. Now, of two of these three households, we have it clearly implied that there were no infants in them. The jailer "rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." His whole household, therefore, were believers and had believers' baptism. In that same epistle in which

Paul tells us that he baptized the household of Stephanas, he tells us that the household of Stephanas had devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints. The whole household of Stephanas were therefore capable of Christian ministry (1 Cor. 16: 15). The household of Lydia is therefore the only one of which we are not told that there were no infants in it. And there is no evidence that she was a married woman at all. The indications are that she was an enterprising tradeswoman who had come from Thyatira, in Asia, to Philippi, in Macedonia, to sell her wares, and her household was composed of her servants and subordinates who assisted her in the conduct of her business. At least we have no right to infer infants unless we know it was the custom of the apostles to baptize infants.

This silence of the New Testament on the subject is generally admitted, but we are told that we must not make too much of the silence of Scripture, for there are many other things of which the Scriptures are silent that we practice without scruple. We practice female communion, *i. e.*, admit women to the Lord's Supper, though there were no women present at its institution. I confess that it is very hard for me to respect such an argument as that; but since it is seriously proposed, I must treat it seriously. Let me simply say, then, that the Lord's Supper was delivered by Christ to his apostles, and by them to the church, and in the

church we are told that there is neither male nor female, but we are all one, all equal in Christ Jesus.

But the great argument for infant baptism is made from the identity and perpetuity of the church. The Jewish church and the Christian church are one and the same institution, it is said, and inasmuch as infants were members of the Jewish church, they are still members of the Christian church, there being no command to put them out; and if members of the church, they are entitled to baptism as the profession and acknowledgment of such membership.* The covenant is the same; there is only a change of seals. Baptism comes in the room of circumcision.

This identity of the Jewish and Christian dispensations is a figment. In the first place, the Jewish dispensation was not a church, but a State; in the second place, Jesus, while the Jewish institution was still existing, spoke of his church as not yet in existence, as a thing of the future, saying, "I will build my church;" in the third place, we are told that the church is *not* founded on Abraham or Moses, but on Christ, and could not be founded until Christ was manifest and his divinity demonstrated by the resurrection; in the fourth place, so far from the covenants of these two dispensations being the same, they were opposites—one was a covenant of flesh and the other a covenant of faith; one was entered by a natural and the other by a spiritual birth. Nico-

demus was an orthodox member of the Jewish church. Yet Jesus told him that if he was not born again he could not see the kingdom of God which he had come to establish. The disciples of Christ were thoroughbred Jews, in good standing and full fellowship in the Jewish church, but Jesus said to them, "Except ye be converted ye can in no wise enter the kingdom of heaven." That does not look as if the Jewish and the Christian institutions are one and the same. It is true that the gospel was contained in the covenant made with Abraham; but it was contained in promise only, and that promise was never realized in the Jewish institution. The covenant with Abraham, that in his seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed, was never fulfilled, was never in force until Christ came in the flesh. The identity of the Jewish and Christian covenants, the idea that the old and the new covenants were the same except in their seals, that the only difference is that baptism is substituted for circumcision, appears utterly absurd when we consider two things: First, that the Jewish Christians continued to practice circumcision after they were baptized and became Christians. If baptism came in the place of circumcision why did they hold on to circumcision even after they received baptism? If such a substitution had been made, certainly they never heard of it, for they went on circumcising their children even after they had received baptism.

Another thing is that if baptism came in the room of circumcision it is very strange that the apostles did not tell these Jewish Christians so when they insisted that the Gentile Christians should be circumcised as well as baptized. Jewish Christian teachers went among the Gentile churches and said to them, "Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses ye can not be saved." How easy it would have been to put these teachers to silence by saying that baptism had now come in the room of circumcision and had superseded it. These teachers might have been reconciled to this slight change in the covenant. But the apostle taught them that the whole legal system, of which circumcision was a part, had been done away in Christ, that the middle wall which had separated Jew and Gentile had not simply had another door made into it, men entering by baptism now when formerly they entered by circumcision, but that it had been utterly broken down, and that God had made out of the divided races of humanity one new man, or church, so making peace; that not only the seal of the covenant had been changed, but that seal, covenant, and all had been abolished utterly.

But if there is no support for Infant Baptism in the New Testament, and none in the argument from the identity of the old and new dispensations, we are asked to explain the early practice of it among Christians. We find it practiced among

Christians as early as the second century. How are we to explain its existence in the church so near to the age of the apostles if it was not derived from them? This is not hard to understand if we remember that these early Christian fathers, as they are called, if they were nearest the apostles were also nearest the heathen. They were saturated with heathen ideas and influences, and when they became Christians they brought many of these ideas with them into the church. One of these was the idea of original sin. They believed that infants inherited the guilt of their fathers and were all sinners in the sight of God. Another was the idea of baptismal regeneration, or the doctrine that water, when administered in connection with some mysterious form, could take away sin. Heathen libations and lustrations were supposed to have this virtue of cleansing the soul of sin. Now put these two errors together, *i. e.*, that the infant soul is depraved and that water can cleanse depravity, and infant baptism easily follows. That these two doctrines were held by some of the early Christian fathers is simply a matter of history. Indeed the creeds that have come down to us from that day still attribute this efficacy to baptism when administered to infants. The creed of the Romish Church openly teaches the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. And the Episcopal form for the baptism of infants leans so strongly in that direction that many take its

teaching as nothing less than the regeneration of infants in baptism. It certainly seems more reasonable, if not more charitable, to explain infant baptism in this way than to attribute it to the apostles who never so much as mention it. The great German commentator, Meyer, attributes its origin to the stern doctrine of original sin held by these early fathers.

I appreciate and approve the motive which many good people have in bringing their children to receive baptism, but I mourn the mistake nevertheless. These parents may think that they are doing their duty by their children and doing God a service in the practice of this rite. But in fact they sin against the child and against God. We sin against the child when we deny to him the right to volunteer in the service of Christ, to enter of his own consent and by his own act into covenant with Christ, to express his own personal faith in Jesus and his personal submission to him in his appointed way. And we sin against God when we teach for doctrines of revelation the commandments of men; when we do in his name what he has never enjoined upon us, and bind his laws upon those who can not believe and obey them. Whatever the sincerity of our intentions, they have no warrant in his word, and therefore can not proceed from faith. And whatever is not of faith is sin.

XV.

THE PERPETUAL OBLIGATION OF THE GREAT COMMISSION.

And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.—MATT. 28: 18-20.

ALL who truly accept Christianity must accept it as a diffusive and universal religion. To deny its universality would be to deny its very nature. It would be like denying to the sun the power of radiating its own light, or to leaven the power of diffusion, or to life the power of growth. These are all essential properties which cannot be denied without denying the very reality of the things themselves.

But while there can be no proper difference of opinion among Christians about the diffusive and universal character of the kingdom of Christ, there is considerable difference touching the manner of its diffusion, some holding that it is to be diffused by the divine providence without the aid of man, others that it is to be extended purely through individual influence and effort, and others, again, that it must be spread abroad likewise by organized co-operation of Christians, such as is represented

in our modern missionary societies. As an example of what may be called the providential method of spreading the gospel, I may cite the remark of Dr. Ryland, a great light in his day among the English Baptists, who, when William Cary arose in a Baptist association to ask whether it was not the duty of Christians to enter into some practical co-operation for the conversion of the heathen, rebuked him sharply, saying: "Sit down, young man! when God wants to convert the heathen, he will do it without your aid or mine." That view of the spread of the gospel, at that time so prevalent as to be almost universal, is pretty well out of date now.

There remains, however, a considerable number of people who think that the gospel is to be spread abroad among men by individual rather than by organized effort, and who, therefore, disfavor and deplore the modern missionary movement as being contrary to the proper principle of spreading the gospel, and, besides, both illusive and ineffective. Now, if this were only a protest against the over-value of organization, if it only stopped with saying to Christians: "You must not set too high an estimate on your societies, you must not trust to them to do all the work of evangelizing the world, you must understand that the chief part of this work must be done by individuals rather than by institutions, and by our influence rather than our affluence, by our work rather than our wealth," I

should heartily approve such sentiments. The idea that we have only to drop a nickel into the slot in order to see the missionary machine go may be a very comforting one to an indolent and easy-going faith, but it is altogether incorrect. The missionary machine must run, not by money simply, but by faith, or it will soon run into the ground. And at its very best the machine can only do a comparatively small part of the work to be done.

But when it is said that all the work of evangelizing the world is to be done through individual influence and effort only, and through that natural and indirect contact with the nations of the world which a Christian's business may occasion, and when it is said in support of this idea that this great commission, as we call it, is really exaggerated by the church of our age, that it is not so great as we suppose, that it was simply a charge to the apostles and not a charge to the church, that it was given for the first age of the church and not for all ages till Christ shall return—to all this I must demur with all my heart and might. These words that I have read for a text, "Go, make disciples of all nations," were intended to be not of temporary, but of permanent obligation; they were not for the apostles only but for all disciples to the end of time, and are as binding on you and me as they were on Peter and John. "By these words of the great commission we shall be justi-

fied, or by them we shall be condemned." Every one of us shall give account of himself to God for his treatment of this last, great charge to his disciples.

You may say, however, that I must not rest in this great and sweeping assertion of the permanent and universal obligation of this great commission; I must prove it. Very well. To the proof, then.

1. I argue the permanent authority of this whole commission from the general admission of all who call themselves Christians that some part of this commission is still binding on the church. The duty of making disciples, of teaching them what Christ has commanded, is admitted by all. And the duty of baptizing them is also admitted by all except the Quakers, so far as I know. Now the obligation of making disciples and of baptizing believers rests on precisely the same authority as the obligation to go out among the nations to this end. How can one consistently hold that it is proper to make and baptize disciples, but that it is not proper to go out into all the world for that purpose? The same authority which is behind one of these commands is behind them all. If we let go any part of this great commission, we must let go every part. We can not retain the obligation to make disciples and to baptize them while we repudiate the obligation to go into all the world to that very end. If we yield the obligation to go,

we must yield at the same time and for the same reason the obligation to teach and baptize. For they all rest on precisely the same foundation and must stand or fall together.

I do not, however, say this so much in the interest of argument as in the interest of clearness. I only want us to see to what this position, that the commission was binding only on the apostles, leads, not in order to restrain from following our logic to the utmost, if it is correct, for that we must do, but simply that we may test its correctness the more carefully.

2. But I argue still more confidently the permanent obligation of this commission from its connection with the great words which go before it. Christ has risen from the dead, and after forty days spent to a considerable extent in the instruction of his disciples, he now sums up the significance of his life, death and resurrection in these words: "All authority is given to me in heaven and in earth; therefore go, disciple all nations." Or, as it is said in Luke's account: "Thus it behooved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead, that in his name, [by his authority,] repentance and remission of sins should be preached among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." That is, the great object of Christ's death and resurrection was that he might receive authority of his Father to empower his disciples to preach the gospel among all nations. Now does it not seem an incredible

letting down and belittling of these great words to say that the great object of Christ's life, death and resurrection was not that all his disciples in all generations might preach the gospel unto all nations, but only that twelve men in one generation should preach the gospel to so many of the nations as they could reach? Is not this a tremendous introduction to a very short chapter, a stupendous preamble to an insignificant resolution? Christ died and rose again for what purpose? Why, that twelve apostles might have the power and privilege of preaching the gospel among such Gentiles as they could reach, but when they were dead the story should stop just where they left it, or else creep over the world as best it could. Such a view is not only improbable, it is unreasonable; it is not only unreasonable, it is preposterous and incredible.

3. But a third argument for the perpetual obligation of this commission is found in the very work which it enjoins. It was impossible for that work to be accomplished by any twelve men, however diligent and faithful they might be. Not only would it be impossible for them to do it, but it would be impossible for them to direct it, with any number of assistants. The commission bears on its face the evidence of its perpetual obligation. What does that commission enjoin? First, that they should go out among all nations, into all the world. Now that was not possible to the apostles.

For at least half the world was not discovered until some fifteen hundred years after the giving of the great commission. In fact, the world was for the most part at that time an unknown world. The Roman empire covered a large tract of Europe and Asia and a little strip of Africa, and beyond that the nations were unknown. The apostles seem to have understood by the commission the Jewish world; they afterwards learned it was the Roman world, but of the full extent of that great commission they had a very meagre conception even when they died. Not only were these nations unknown to each other, but they were also, for the most part, inaccessible to each other. There was among the greatest of them only a narrow and feeble stream of communication, and among most of them none at all. Corea is now called by pre-eminence the hermit nation because so cut off from the rest of the world. But even Corea is coming into contact with the rest of the world. In the time of the apostles and for ages after there was not one hermit nation only; there were hundreds, and the barriers between them were only gradually broken down. Even now, with all the marvelous facilities of communication which this age provides, it would be a vast undertaking for twelve men to evangelize the world in a single generation. In that age it was an impossible undertaking.

But consider again what the commission re-

quired to be done among these nations when the gospel had been brought to them. They were to be disciplined and then baptized. Now this required at least two things; first language and then time. There is no evidence that the apostles could speak any languages but the Greek and Hebrew. The Greek was the language which prevailed all over the empire, and the Hebrew was their native tongue, just as in our country the great majority can speak English, and many another tongue beside. You have already asked yourself, however, if the apostles did not all have miraculously bestowed on them the gift of tongues, and were thus qualified to preach to all nations. That is a very general idea I know, but it is not correct. There is no support for it in the Scriptures. The gift of tongues did accompany the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, but it was used not to preach the gospel, but to give thanks to God on behalf of all nations, because this outpouring of the Spirit was for the enlightenment and salvation of all nations. The disciples did not use this gift of tongues to preach to men, but to praise God. And as they passed from the upper room to the temple speaking forth these praises, the people heard them and wondered. But when the time came to preach one man preached to them in one language, the Greek, which they all understood. The only references which we have in Scripture to speaking with tongues show that this

gift was used to praise God, and not to preach to men. Scripture nowhere tells us that this gift was bestowed upon the apostles to enable them to preach the gospel to all nations.

Then the apostles would need, not only language, but time to make disciples. Those barriers of ignorance and error which opposed the progress of truth among the heathen could not be overturned in a day. They had to be slowly undermined. If the apostles could have adopted Mohammed's short method with unbelieving nations, presented them the alternatives of faith or the sword, they might have made speedy work of their commission. If they could have taken the method of Charlemagne in later history and marched the unbelieving army into the river and had them baptized by companies and regiments, or if they had pursued the manner of the great Jesuit missionary, Francis Xavier, who had the Japanese assemble in multitudes, and sprinkled the baptismal waters upon them in a mass, they might perhaps have executed their great commission in their life time. But they practiced no such cheap and easy methods of evangelization. They first enlightened men's minds, then persuaded their hearts, and baptized such as believed in Christ. This took time. Paul remained three years in the one city of Ephesus and we know not how long in others. We are bound to think, therefore, that the gospel was not

designed to compass the whole earth in a single generation.

It is true that Paul speaks in Colossians of the gospel's having come into all the world and gone to every creature under heaven, but these can be only general expressions of the wide extent of the gospel in that age which are not to be pressed beyond the limits of reason and common sense and made to contradict the general teaching and tenor of Scripture.

4. One further argument for the perpetual obligation of this great commission is found in the promise which is attached to it. "I will be with you always, even to the end of the world." It is true that the literal translation of this is, "I will be with you always, even to the end of the days," but that only strengthens the argument. The promise is not to the end of *your* days, but always, even to the end of all days, to the end of history, to the end of time, till days shall be no more. The argument is simply this, then: this promise reaches on to the end of time, to the last day in the history of the race, even to the end of the days. The commandment must therefore endure as long as the promise which is attached to it. They are inseparable. The limit of one is the limit of the other. If you can prove that this commandment is abrogated, you prove at the same time and by the same arguments that the promise of Christ's presence is withdrawn also; for these two

are joined together in the same commission and can not be sundered without the destruction of both. Christ says the promise is perpetual. "I will be with you always." The commandment must be equally enduring.

I conclude, therefore, that the great commission is binding not for one generation, but for all; not on twelve disciples, but on every disciple; not on the founders of the church only, but on all the church to the end of time, for these four reasons: 1. It is admitted by all calling themselves Christians that some part of this commission is binding, but we can not accept a part without accepting the whole, since all rests on the same authority. 2. The words which precede the commission, the assertion of the universal authority of Christ in virtue of his death and resurrection, agree with its permanent, but cannot be reconciled with its temporary, obligation. 3. The work assigned in the commission, to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations, was so great that it could not be done in a single generation and must therefore extend through many generations. 4. The promise annexed to the great commission contemplates that the work will go on always, even to the end of the days of the Christian age. This last great charge of Jesus to his disciples is not a charge to his apostles only, but a charge to the church to the end of time, the most solemn charge ever committed to men, on fidelity to which the

destiny of the church and of every disciple depends. I charge you therefore, brethren, before God and our Savior Jesus Christ, that this word of the crucified and risen Lord be preached as far as lieth in us to every creature. Not only the salvation of the heathen but our own salvation depends upon it. As has been said, "The church that ceases to be evangelistic will soon cease to be evangelical;" yea, and the church which ceases to be evangelical will soon cease to be anything. Nothing less than the great ambition to evangelize the world can save the church from corruption and decay. She must reach out her hands into all the world or else they shall soon fall helpless at her side, prospered in nothing. We must believe in the whole gospel, brethren, or it will profit us nothing; not only in the gospel of teach, the gospel of believe, the gospel of be baptized, but in the gospel of go. Let us not fear what some are pleased to call the "missionary hobby." That hobby goes somewhere, at any rate, which makes it differ from all other hobbies known to me. I know that our smart age is telling us that missions are a failure. But pretty much the same men are telling us that marriage is a failure, the church a failure, life is a failure, God is a failure. And so they are, all are failures to those who have no faith. But he that believeth shall not be ashamed. The true church of Christ shall never fail nor be discouraged till he hath set judgment in the earth, and

the desire of all nations shall be satisfied in the love of God.

XVI.

THE TIMID WOMAN'S FAITH.

For she said, If I touch but his garments, I shall be made whole.—
MARK 5: 28.

THE great interest felt by the people about Capernaum especially, in the ministry of Jesus at this time, drew throngs about him continually. At one time we read that the house where he was stopping was so full of eager attendants upon his ministry that there was no room to receive them, not so much as standing room even about the doors. At another time, after one of his most striking miracles the multitude came together so that they, Jesus and his friends, could not so much as eat bread, had not time for their accustomed meals. On the same day, apparently, there was gathered unto him a great multitude on the lake-shore fronting the city, so that he had to withdraw from them by getting into a boat and putting a sufficient space of water between him and them, so that he might teach them as they stood there on the land.

Now popularity, though it be so much coveted and sought after by some of us, is not the unalloyed pleasure which it seems. A President's reception, for example, may be a delight to the throng of visitors and sight-seers who make up the

long procession, but it is a sore tax on the strength, the patience, and the patriotism of the President, a sort of periodic purgatory through which he must pass as the penalty of his eminent office. Many public men in our country have literally died of their popularity, that is, of meeting the demands which the public appreciation laid upon them. Even when this popularity is the result of a true appreciation of a man's services to his country, a perception and recognition of real merit, as often it is not, it is perhaps more an affliction than a blessing. But when a man's popularity is founded on a mistaken view of his character, when it ascribes to him a character which he does not possess or desire, and when he knows that as soon as the people discern his real spirit and purpose they will desert and despise him, then this popularity to a true man becomes well-nigh insufferable. Such, largely, was the popularity of Jesus. It was a popularity which he knew was founded on a mistaken view of his character, a delusive expectation that he was a political and temporal, rather than a spiritual deliverer. Therefore it not only wearied and exhausted him, but it saddened and oppressed him, and he sought to escape the crowd by taking refuge sometimes in the desert, sometimes in the wild mountainous regions of the country, and sometimes among the heathen. This time he seeks relief from the Capernaum populace by an excursion to the country of Gadara on the

opposite side of the lake, a half-heathen region apparently, not only because settled by Gentiles as largely as by Jews, but because the Jews of that country had become largely heathen in practice and held many of their national institutions and traditions in rather low estimate. But the conflict with the Gadarene demons and the destruction of the swine in their exorcism so disaffects and dismays the Gadarenes that they beseech him to depart out of their country, and so he is driven to return to Capernaum. There the multitudes are watching and waiting to welcome him back. Not only do they desire to hear his teaching and behold his miracles, but there are troubled and afflicted souls among them who desire the exercise of his miraculous power in their behalf. Among these was a ruler of the synagogue, a man whose office was, as I suppose, more a temporal than a spiritual ruler, not so much a teacher in the synagogue, for it appears to have had no set teachers, but a sort of trustee and manager who looked after all the expenses and services incident to the synagogue work. This man, Jairus, had a little daughter at the point of death, and Jesus was just returned from Gadara in time to heal her. He, therefore, sought Jesus as soon as he had landed, the multitude already thronging him again, and prayed that he would go and lay his hands on his daughter that she might live. The Lord consented, and the multitudes, eager always to behold a

miracle, followed, not in an orderly procession, but in a tumult, pressing and jostling him on all sides. While on his way to the house of Jairus, a woman with an issue of blood, a chronic hemorrhage of twelve years' standing, having heard of his many miracles, and doubtless also learning that he was even now on his way to heal a dying girl, kept edging her way eagerly but timidly through the throng until she got near enough to touch the tassel or fringe of the long cloak-like garment which Jesus was accustomed to wear. For her faith was such that she said: "If I may but touch his garment I shall be made whole." And so, putting out her hand quickly, nervously, she touched the tassel. Instantly the hemorrhage ceased and she felt a new life bounding through her body. It is the cure of this timid yet trusting woman that I want us to consider for the rest of the sermon.

Of course we must all remark that the woman was cured by faith. That is not only implied in her words, "If I may but touch his clothes I shall be made whole," but appears in the positive assurance of Christ, "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole, go in peace." This lesson of faith is indeed the main lesson of this passage, and though it be so old and trite a lesson it can never be learned too well. "Saved by faith"—what does that mean? Simply this, that we are saved not by a simple exercise of the divine energy, we being utterly passive and inert in the forces

of salvation, but we are saved by the concurrence of our will with the will of God, the co-operation of our strength, however feeble that may be, with the gracious working of the Almighty. Faith is a general term for man's part in the salvation of his soul. And the necessity of faith is absolute. Without it it is impossible to please God, and therefore impossible to receive his favor.

Of the faith of this afflicted woman we may observe four things: its condition, its means, its character, its reward. Consider each of these in turn.

First, we see in this woman's *realization* of her wretchedness the great condition of faith. We may conceive of her as being just as grievously and hopelessly afflicted as she really was, and yet ignorant of the nature of her affliction or else indifferent to it. There are multitudes of people in the world who are mortally afflicted, who have but a few years, it may be a few months or weeks, to live, but who have no conviction of the deadly character of their disease and the nearness of their end. How difficult, how impossible it would be to induce such a person to put himself in the hands of a physician or have any faith in the remedies proposed. Ignorance of one's true condition and the indifference which it breeds is one of the greatest hindrances to faith. Until one realizes his danger he refuses all remedies.

This woman had been brought to realize her

wretched and incurable condition not only through the pains which she had suffered but through the failure of all the remedies of which she had made trial. "She had suffered many things of many physicians and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse." We need not attribute this result wholly to the quackery of the physicians. It is true that the ancient physician, especially in the East, was generally a quack, as indeed he is too numerously in our time. But we may grant that these doctors did the best they could. There are a great many diseases which the doctors cannot cure. And the only end they served in this woman's case was to produce in her mind a deeper conviction of her utterly helpless and wretched condition. But in this they were doing her a better service than they knew; for they were preparing her heart to receive joyfully the word of Christ's power when she should hear it.

Very much in this way God deals with the human soul and with human society. The soul is ailing. It resorts to the physicians for help; to pleasure, to business, to learning and philosophy, to various other agencies which promise relief. But by all these expensive but delusive remedies it is nothing bettered, but rather grows worse. They only aggravate in the end the soul's wretchedness and prepare it to accept God's great remedy for soul-sickness, Christ and his service. Human

society in every land, in ever age, is sick. The doctors of all schools and creeds are moved by all manner of motives, the highest and the lowest run to the rescue; doctors of law, of philosophy, of science, of divinity, all gather around the social invalid and ply him with their remedies, each protesting that his is the panacea. We can not fairly say that by all these endeavors society is nothing bettered, but rather grows worse, because many of them are honest but mistaken endeavors to apply divine truth to the wants of men; but only in so far as they do that do they help society. And in truth, their greatest service is that they do but deepen in men the conviction of their own misery, of the helplessness of all human remedies, and so prepare the way for faith in the Great Physician. There is comfort to be derived from both individual and social sufferings, in that they induce in the mind the condition of faith; they drive men in very desperation to the foot of the cross.

2. We should note also the means of this woman's faith. Paul says that faith comes by hearing the word of God. So came this afflicted woman's faith. "Having heard the things concerning Jesus," says the account, according to the Revised Version, "she came behind and touched him." So faith comes always from hearing the things concerning Jesus. Her faith was not bestowed upon her by miracle. It did not proceed

from her peculiar temperament. It was the product of the truth in her soul. If we want to induce faith in our own hearts or in the minds of others we must bring the mind in contact with the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. How much of the prevailing unbelief is due to the displacement of the divine truth by human traditions and opinions, making void the word of God by the commandments of men! "The things concerning Jesus"—this is the theme of the gospel, and it is the covering up of these things, or the mixing them with things concerning merely human leaders and teachers, that has made faith scarce where it ought to abound. The story of divine power and compassion as revealed in Jesus will ever produce faith in the hearts of men when faithfully and earnestly proclaimed. And to make such proclamation is the great duty and mission of the church.

3. Consider next the mixed and imperfect character of the woman's faith. It was an adulterated faith. It contained a large element of impurity. In the first place it was seriously marred by ignorance. She had faith in the power of Christ, yet she supposed that this power resided in his body or in his garments rather than in his gracious will, and thought it was enough if she might touch his garments. This imperfect faith had come to her through the imperfect reports of Christ's power

which had spread over the country. It seemed to be the view of the multitudes generally that it was only necessary to touch the garment of Jesus to be made whole. Her imperfect faith was the fruit of the erroneous teaching which she had received concerning Jesus; and this is the cause of a great deal of imperfect faith. Then we note a mingling of confidence and timidity. She is very confident of cure. She says within herself: "If I may but touch his clothes I shall be made whole." But she fears to approach him openly, and approaches him from behind that he may not see her, as if she could steal a cure without his knowledge, and puts forth her hand quickly as if she would snatch his healing virtue from him without his consent. Her touch is a touch of faith, and yet it is a faith mixed with fear. She has not yet that perfect faith in Christ and that perfect love for him which casteth out all fear.

Yet Christ blessed her imperfect faith. It is not necessary that one's faith be absolutely pure and full in order to bring God's blessing. It is true that the purer the faith the fuller the blessing, and yet a low degree of faith, and that much mixed with superstition and ignorance, may be graciously blest of God, as it was in the case of this woman. The ignorant and crude faith of many believers should not discourage us. God can not only bless such faith but he can refine it of all its impurities.

4. Now note finally the rewards of the woman's faith. He that truly comes to God—comes in the faith that he is, and that he rewards those who diligently seek him—shall never fail of his reward. The faith of this afflicted woman was abundantly rewarded. First, she got that which she most desired, her health. The fountain from which that hemorrhage had flowed for those twelve years was dried up and the flow was stayed forever. And not only that, but she felt the tides of health coursing once more through her body, and she stood there in the midst of that multitude as well and strong as any. She would no longer drag her way through the world the timid, shrinking, wretched being that she had been, but would be sound and well as she was in youth.

Now health is an unspeakable blessing, and it is our duty both to preserve it when we have it and to seek it when we have lost it. And yet it is not the only nor the greatest blessing. If you are whole in body only you are not made entirely whole. You are only half-well yet. This woman's mind was still in darkness both concerning the gracious character of Christ and concerning her own relation to God. Her body needed healing; but still more did her mind need enlightening and her faith need purging of its dross of ignorance and superstition. Jesus would not let her depart from him half-blest. She should carry with her the fulness of his blessing. She should not leave him think-

ing that she had been cured without his will and knowledge; that her quick, passionate touch had not been felt by him; she should know him better than that. Nor should she go away rejoicing simply that she was healed of her disease, but she should carry with her the still more precious consciousness that she was a child of God. And so he brings her to the confession of her faith, that he may pronounce his blessing upon it and acknowledge her as a daughter of the Lord. How gently he deals with her! He does not turn to her and accuse her of seeking to steal her cure. He brings her to a voluntary confession of her deed. "Who touched me?" he asked. The disciples are surprised. "Lord, the multitude throngs thee. Every one is touching you." But he knows a touch of faith when he feels it. That thrills him to the center of his soul. "He looked about him to see her that had done this thing." His eyes rested on the timid woman and "she fearing and trembling came and fell down before him and told him all the truth." But instead of the rebuke which she had expected to hear, he said unto her: "Daughter, thy faith hath made the whole: go in peace." Surely the sound of these words, the assurance of God's love contained in that word, "daughter," was more to her than her healed wound and her restored health. The joy that filled her at the moment of her healing was not to be compared with the added joy of being owned and greeted

as a child of God, a daughter of the Heavenly Father.

We may be sure that as often as we are healed of our diseases, we are healed by the goodness and power of God. But it does not always please the Father to heal the sickness of his children. Disease often proves a blessing by bringing us into an experience of God's love which we had never had otherwise. Surely we are very dull if we have not learned that. But it is the will of God that our souls should be purged of all the plague and stain of sin. And when we seek this purification of heart by faith in Jesus and obedience to his commandment, we not only get forgiveness, but we receive with it the adoption of sons of God. Not only are we justified by faith, but we are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of us as have been baptized into Christ have not only put off sin, but have put on Christ, and through our acceptance of him are ourselves accepted in the beloved Son as sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty.

XVII.

DAVID LIVINGSTONE.

A SERMON TO CHILDREN.

But I hold not my life of any account, as dear unto myself, so that I may accomplish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.—ACTS 20: 24.

THESE are the words of Paul, the great apostle and missionary, when he was making his farewell address to his beloved church at Ephesus; a church which was begun and built as the result of his missionary labors. The words teach us, in the first place, that Paul had a particular course to run, or task to finish, or, as we say now, calling to follow, which no one else could follow for him, and then that he esteemed the following of his missionary calling as of more importance and value than his life, so that he would rather die than not go about preaching Jesus to the heathen. He did not count his life dear unto himself if only he could finish this course with joy.

Let these words, then, serve as text for a sermon on another great missionary who has lived and worked in our day, and who may be called the greatest missionary, and indeed in some respects the greatest man, who has lived in the present century. I want to tell you something in this sermon

about David Livingstone, who was the first man to carry the gospel into the heart of Africa.

He was a Scotch boy; and that was a good thing to start with; because missionaries must have a great deal of prudence and patience; they have to endure a good many hardships and suffer a good many privations; they have often to be separated from friends and be surrounded by enemies, and they have to do a great deal of hard work. All this calls for faith and constancy, courage and plodding industry, and whether we are of Scotch descent or not, if we know anything of Scotch history and character, we must know that Scotchmen are remarkable for all these things.

Then, he was poor boy, and that many of you will think a misfortune. He had no opportunity to go to school for years as most of you have, but had to go out to work in a cotton factory in his native town at an early age and help to earn a living for the family. But so long as we have enough to eat and wear, we do not need wealth. It is better for boys to grow up poor than rich. I know it seems impossible to make boys or their parents believe that, but it is true, for a great many reasons that I cannot stop to speak of now. One thing poverty does for us is that it compels us to work, and he who has learned to work has learned one of the greatest lessons of life.

This boy, David, not only learned to work so that his employers and his masters were impressed

with his industry and good character, but he did not, as some do, refuse to cultivate his mind because he had to work with his hands. He learned to love good books, and would often have a book open before him on the spinning-jenny while he followed his daily task. On Saturday afternoons, when his employers gave him a half-holiday, he would go out in the hedges to collect rare specimens of flowers for the study of botany or to the quarries for rare specimens of minerals in his study of geology.

And yet he was not one of those good boys who could not play and joke and rollic with other boys. Like other boys he had to be punished sometimes. He tells that the last flogging his father gave him was for refusing to read a book called "Practical Christianity," which was his task on Sunday afternoon, and which he found rather dry reading, I suppose.

He grew up to be a wise, active, sturdy boy, with a growing thirst for knowledge. But as yet, though he had good Christian parents, he was not a Christian himself, nor does he appear to have thought much about his duty of obeying and confessing Christ. He read a book about this time, which brought him to decide for Christ and made him resolve to devote himself to work among the heathen. China was the field of his choice. But about that time there was war between England and China and he could not carry out his purpose.

Meanwhile a missionary from Africa, the famous Robert Moffat, whose daughter, Mary, Livingstone afterwards married, was going through England appealing for missionaries to return with him to Africa. David Livingstone resolved to go and did spend some nine years in Southern Africa, laboring among the savage Bechuanas, not only teaching them the gospel, but, at the same time, showing them how to dig canals, build houses, and till their lands.

Now Africa, your maps will show, is a great continent, about as large as North America, but instead of being thickly settled, like our own country, having towns and villages and farms and railroads and multitudes of busy people, it is in great part a wilderness inhabited by wild beasts and infested by deadly serpents. It has indeed many tribes of men scattered over it, but these are ruled over by cruel chiefs who are almost always at war with one another, so that when they lie down to sleep at night they can never feel secure, but are always dreaming of some enemy pursuing them with a spear.

There were wide fields, but instead of being covered with growing corn and wheat, they were either parched and desert or else covered with thorns and briars and great, dense forests. There were beautiful lakes and great rivers, but no great cities grew beside them, nor did any great and noble steamers ply their waters. Except the frail

and rude canoe of the savages, there were no boats to disturb their quiet waters. Africa was settled only on its edges, and in its interior and center it was the dark continent into which no white man had penetrated, and through which no white man had passed; for you know that the native tribes of Africa are all of a dark color.

And then the white people who lived on the coast, instead of trying to help these poor savage blacks and make them better, stirred them up to make war with one another, and then bribed the chiefs to bring them all their prisoners and sell them as slaves. So the Arabs and Portuguese and Dutch would have their gangs of slaves, hitched together like beasts, brought down to the coast and then put in slave-ships and sent to other countries to be sold into slavery.

Well, Livingstone resolved that he would go into this country and preach to these people the gospel and open up a way of communication between them and the nations of the world, so that they might learn how to support and protect themselves and cease to devour one another like beasts of prey.

It was a perilous undertaking. For, as I have said, the country was a wilderness. There were no roads and no rivers that they knew of; and they had no trustworthy guides. In some parts the country was desert, and they were in danger of perishing both from hunger and thirst. Then

there were the wild beasts in their path. Livingstone had already had one encounter with a lion in which the beast crunched his arm between his teeth and left a mark and a maimed limb, by which his body was identified when he was found dead many years afterwards in the wilderness. Then there were savages, more cruel than the beasts of the forests, who would threaten and hinder him, if they did not take his life. Meanest of all were the white slave-traders, who hated the missionary because they knew that his success would break up their wicked business.

But, trusting in the Lord and loving his fellow-men even though they were degraded savages, Livingstone gathered a little band of natives who had been taught in his schools and had become devoted more or less to their teacher, and took his journey into the wilderness.

I can not in one short sermon begin to tell you of his many and great expeditions into Africa, and the important discoveries which he made. I hope your parents and friends in buying books for holiday and birthday presents, will look for some accounts of the life and travels of David Livingstone, that you may read these for yourselves. But you may form some judgment of his labors if you will consider the difficulties of the work, the sacrifices by which it was done, and the great and important results to the world.

This little band of missionaries now marching

into the heart of Africa did not have a smooth road before them. They had to take their axes and often hew their way through the tangled brake and thicket. They were often stopped in their course by the jealous and suspicious savages, and though they would not contend with them, it was only by long persuasion and perseverance that they were suffered to pass on. Sometimes they were stopped by sickness and had to go into camp until able to travel again. Sometimes Livingstone, who was a physician, had to turn aside and heal the diseases of the natives. One time a chief whose body had been ripped open by a rhinoceros, sent for the Doctor, and he rose from his tent and went twenty miles through the darkness of night and through the dense forest. This is the way they had to travel in their long journeys, one of which extended for about two thousand miles and took four years for its accomplishment.

Then in all this time Livingstone had to be separated from his family, to whom he was most tenderly attached. His wife was a heroic and devoted woman, who gave her life for Africa. In one of the later expeditions, when they were able to ascend one of the rivers which he had discovered in a steam yacht furnished by the English government, Mrs. Livingstone accompanied him, but died on the journey, and was buried there in that lonely land under a large tree by the riverside. Her hus-

band turned from her grave, saying, "I shall do my duty still, but it is with a darkened horizon that I set about it."

The results of Livingstone's explorations in Africa are so great and wonderful that we all can understand them. Columbus, you all know, discovered America. It may almost be said that Livingstone discovered Africa. We have known the name of the country for a long time, but hardly anything more. If you could see the map of Africa which we had to study when we were children and put it beside that taught in your schools, you would see an amazing difference. Our map of Africa was mostly blank, or else it was fiction and guess work. We knew as little about the inhabitants of Central Africa as we do about the man in the moon. Now steamboats are plying her lakes and rivers, towns and villages are springing up in the midst of her wilds, and by the time some of these boys here are grown to be men railroads and steam-cars will carry travelers through the heart of Africa and her savage tribes will have become peaceful citizens tilling the soil. All this has come of the courage, the faith, the simple devotion to duty, which made David Livingstone what he was, the good soldier and faithful servant of Jesus Christ.

Let us stop here in the middle of this great life and learn one or two of its simple lessons. First, let us learn to honor and reverence the very word

missionary. Let this man's life teach us how great a class they are and what a great work they are doing. Let us think of them while they, far from home and friends, and amid strangers and enemies often, are telling of Jesus and his love. Let us remember them in our prayers, and divide with them our earnings and our savings, that their good work may go on. And let us learn from the example of this good man to live true and faithful lives, devoted to our fellowmen and to the name of Jesus Christ.

When Livingstone had returned from one of his long expeditions he came home to England to plead with his country to send explorers and missionaries into benighted Africa. The fame of his travels had gone abroad among the people. Great crowds flocked to hear him. Nobles and lords gave great dinners in his honor. The newspapers were full of his praise. A vain and selfish man would have had his head turned by so much honor. A sordid man would have made money out of it. But the great missionary entirely forgot himself in his plea for the poor savages. As often as they asked him to speak, he did not tell what he had seen and done or of the great and wonderful country he had explored, but he began to tell about the miserable condition of the heathen, about the horrors of the slave-trade, and to urge his countrymen to come to the rescue of bleeding Africa. Instead of pointing to himself

he always stretched out his hand towards Africa and prayed his people to send her help. We cannot all be like Livingstone in fame, but we can be like him in unselfish service of others. We cannot all be famous, but we can all be faithful. And if we are faithful, even in a humble lot and a lowly sphere, God will see to it that our faithfulness is rewarded with a crown of life that fadeth not away.

XVIII.

THE CHILDLIKE SPIRIT.

Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.—**MATT.** 18: 4.

Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein.—**MARK** 10: 15.

THIS passage opens at the point where Jesus has taken up his active ministry again after a period of retirement and comparative rest. Comparative only, for even in the remote regions of Cæsarea Philippi, whither he had withdrawn with his disciples, there were still multitudes to be instructed, demons to be cast out, and diseases to be healed. Only the pressure upon him was not so great in this thinly-settled region as it had been in the densely-populated country of Galilee. Let it be remembered also that Jesus employed a part of this period of retirement in the instruction of his disciples, both respecting his glorious person as the Son of God and his approaching sufferings and death. He had not only applauded the confession of Peter that he was the Messiah, the Son of the living God, but had confirmed the truth of that confession by his glorious transfiguration in the mountain. At the same time he had predicted to his disciples repeatedly and in plainest words that he must suffer many things of the chief priests and

elders and scribes and be crucified, and that whosoever would be his disciple must also deny himself and take up his cross and follow the example of his Master's sufferings.

Now they are returning from this retirement and these instructions, to Capernaum and the Galilean multitudes, and are soon to set out on the last journey to Jerusalem, where the prophecy of the crucifixion is to have speedy fulfillment. What impression have these teachings left upon the minds of his disciples? How well have they learned the lesson which their Master has been trying to teach them, namely, that he must through sufferings enter into his glory? Very poorly indeed. They were, indeed, well convinced that he should enter into his glory, that he was the great Messiah who should come into the world, and that he was about to establish his kingdom; but the idea that he should suffer, that he should come to his throne by way of the cross and the sepulchre, and that they also must enter his kingdom through self-denial and humiliation, this part of their lesson they had not learned at all. Consequently they are returning from this retirement in very different spirit from their Master. He walks on before his disciples resolute indeed, but sobered and saddened by the shadow of the cross which is already falling across his way. But the disciples who follow him in the distance do not see that shadow. They see rather, or think they do, the glory of the Mes-

sianic kingdom soon to break upon them. And their joy in its approach would be perfect but for this single question: "Who shall be greatest in this glorious kingdom? Shall it be Peter or Andrew, James or John, Simon or Jude, or some one of the others?" Each doubtless could give convincing reasons why he should be elevated to the highest place; for what office-seeker ever yet doubted that he was the best man for the place? or ever lacked reasons to remove the doubts of others? Andrew was the first to follow Jesus, Peter was given the keys of the kingdom, John was the beloved disciple, and no doubt each one of the others had some argument to show that he ought to be preferred above all the rest. At any rate, the dispute waxed so loud that it was overheard by Jesus, though not immediately rebuked by him. He did not turn upon them in the way and sharply reprove them for this self-seeking and ambitious spirit. He left them to have it out for the time. But when the journey was ended and he had reached Capernaum, and the whole company had gone into a house, probably that of Peter, he calls them about him and asks them: "What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?" At first they were silent. They saw at once that there was something of meanness and littleness in the dispute, something unworthy of their Master. But presently they confessed that they were disputing about the pre-eminence.

And then one of them followed the confession with the question: "Master, tell us, who shall be greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

There was a child in the house, Peter's child, perhaps. Jesus called that little child unto him and set him in the midst of them and said: "Except ye turn and become as little children ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." Without the childlike spirit ye not only shall not have eminence in this kingdom, but ye can not have entrance into it. All the conditions of entering Christ's kingdom, and all the laws of promotion after one has entered it, are summed up in this one word—childlikeness. All the commandments of Christ to his disciples are comprehended in this one: "Become as a little child." When he wants to set before us the fittest type, the best representation, the thing most closely resembling a true disciple, he calls a little child to him, first setting him in their midst and then taking him in his arms, saying, "Of such as this is the kingdom of heaven."

Now do we find it difficult to make out the meaning of these words? Then that may mean that we never were children. There are some people of whom we say that they were born old. They are little old men and women from their very cradles. That is not quite true, but the spirit of

childhood may be repressed and checked so early by a false idea of education and training, or more frequently by sheer selfishness and impatience, as to destroy all the freshness and spontaneity of childhood as soon as it makes its appearance. Children may be so drilled into the proprieties of life, they may be so schooled and drilled into artificial conceptions and manners, that they cease to be children before their childhood fairly begins. They may be denied the society of other children, they may be thrust out into the world to make their own way prematurely; they may have to do the work of men and women while they are yet children. All this destroys the very spirit of childhood and perverts and dwarfs the child's nature, developing an abnormal creature that is neither child nor man, but has all the weakness of both. Such persons, of course, will find it hard to understand the meaning of Christ's words: "Become as little children."

Then there is another class to whom this saying of Jesus, "Become as little children," must seem a hard saying, those, namely, who have forgotten that they ever were children. A poet mourns for those who not only lose their love, but lose at length the steadfast certainty that they ever did love. So there be many who have lost not only their childhood, but the very memory of it. The period of childhood is not only past, but forgotten, so utterly forgotten that they can scarcely believe

that they ever were children. A great gulf of oblivion is fixed between their childhood and their manhood, so that there is no communication between them. And when Jesus says that in order to enter his kingdom we must cross that gulf, we must go back to the spirit of childhood, must become as little children, he seems to such to speak words very hard to be understood. Let us hope, however, that all of us have enough of the memory and the spirit of childhood left in us to understand the meaning of Christ's words, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein."

There is one characteristic of childhood that Jesus especially commends to his disciples, that of humility. "Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." What are we to understand by this humility, this humbling one's self? These disciples are to become as this little child. In what respect? wherein do they differ from the child? Put the scene before your mind again. Christ is in the house at Capernaum. His disciples are sitting about him. The child is nestling in his arms. Then he utters the words: "Whosoever shall humble himself and become as this little child, the same shall be greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein." This child was closer to Christ than any

one of his disciples. Wherein was the difference? It was not simply a difference of stature, that the disciples were full grown men and this was only a child; nor a difference in development of mind, that the minds of the disciples were mature and the child's was crude and untrained. The difference was a difference of spirit. The lowliness of the child's mind contrasted strongly with the lofty and vaulting spirit of the disciples. The disciples, even as they sat about Jesus, were not content with their places. Their minds were full of delusive hopes of power; dreams of thrones filled all their thoughts; visions of their own exaltation above the multitude, and even above each other, swam before their eyes continually. And they were impatient to have their visions come to pass; they clamored and strove with one another for pre-eminence. Now the child's mind was empty of all these vain expectations. As it sat there in the midst of the disciples or lay quietly on the bosom of Christ, it had no longing for some more honored place, no ambition to be raised above all the rest and have all eyes centered upon itself. It was content to be where Jesus placed it. Now Jesus says unless you humble yourself and become as this little child in this respect; unless you cast down all these high imaginations of your own promotion and put away all your vain hopes of worldly honor, and have this child's lowliness of mind, so that you will be content wherever I place

you, whether it be on a level with your brethren or beneath them, you can not enter the kingdom of heaven.

But what makes this difference between the disciples and the little one, between Peter and Peter's child? Why is it that the mind of the father is full of vain ambition and that of the child is empty of all such dreams? It is the pride of Peter which has filled his mind with these great expectations, and their absence from the mind of his child is due to the absence of pride. After all it is not the possession but the pride of power that makes the difference.

Let us picture to our minds a king seated upon his glorious throne with his child beside him. About him the multitudes are gathered, all eager to behold the face of royalty. Now mark the difference between the king and the child. The monarch's countenance is flushed with the sense of his greatness. He bears himself as one who is well conscious of his exalted place. The pride of his position he can not conceal. Nor does the king differ from his subjects who shout his praises, except in the possession of power. In pride of power they are all like himself; and each one would be just as haughty in his bearing if he were king. But no trace of pride appears in the face of the child. At first there is a wondering, half-frightened look, which presently gives place to an expression of innocence and peace, as he remem-

bers that he is by his father's side. There is no more sign of pride in the face of this royal child than in that of that peasant's child down there, who, with equal confidence is holding the hand of his father. And the king's child could descend from the throne and take the hand of the peasant's child without any feeling of condescension. The thought of degrading itself by such company would never enter the child's mind if not suggested by others. But the king, his father, could he descend from his throne and take the peasant's hand without feeling that he was stooping very low in the act? Herein we have the difference between the humble spirit of childhood and the haughty spirit of the world. And this spirit of childhood, says Jesus, is the spirit of his true disciples. "To become as a little child" is the indispensable requirement of all who would enter his kingdom.

The spirit of childhood is the spirit of faith no less than the spirit of humility, indeed, because it is the spirit of humility. A humble mind is the great condition and preparation of faith, as a proud and haughty mind is the great cause of unbelief. How does the child's mind show its humility. First, by its willingness to confess its ignorance. The endless questions which our children put to us are so many confessions of ignorance. The reason their parents don't ask more questions is not that they know so much, but they

are ashamed to confess that they don't know. It is our pride, and not our wisdom, which checks our questions. Then, children are generally willing to part with their errors when they learn the truth, and in that they differ also greatly from their parents. We hold on to our errors through sheer pride of consistency, because to give them up would be to own our fallibility; and though we confess that in general, we shrink from any particular demonstration of it. The docility of the child-mind is another proof of humility. The childlike mind not only confesses that it does not know, but that it wants to know. It is willing to be instructed. Pride is the great hindrance to docility. In the first place it pre-occupies the mind with error. This was the trouble with the disciples. Their minds were so taken up with erroneous notions and idle delusions concerning Christ's kingdom that his teachings respecting the true nature of his kingdom could find no lodgment in them. All that he said about his sufferings and death and about the crosses they must bear if they would be his disciples, made no impression upon them. In the second place, pride stands at the door of the mind and forbids the entrance of truth for fear that it may find lodgment. It will have nothing to cross the threshold of the mind that does not fall in with the convictions which it cherishes already. Thus Peter's pride stood at the door of his mind when Jesus sought to instruct

him of his coming sufferings and death and forbade this truth of his passion admittance. Peter refused to entertain any such thought, saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord," and "this shall never be." In the third place, pride seeks to destroy the teachable spirit by barring out truth from the mind by a false philosophy which would assure a man that he is sufficient for himself, and therefore does not need a revelation of God nor the exercise of faith. Now truth is as needful to man as the trellis is to the vine. And faith is as natural to the mind and as truly a part of it as the tendril that belongs to the vine and is a part of it. As the vine shorn of its tendrils ceases to that extent to be a vine, so a man in whom the capacity of faith has been destroyed, is so far not a man. He has been shorn of a part of his nature. It is the tendency of our pride to strike down the trellis of truth, to destroy the tendrils of faith, and so to make the soul creep in self-sufficiency instead of climbing up towards God. Now in childhood these tendrils of faith have not yet been clipped by the cruel shears of pride. So Jesus commends to us the faith of little children: "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as with the faith of a little child, he shall not enter therein."

The childlike spirit is the spirit of obedience. I do not say unquestioning obedience, for, as has been said, children are full of questions. But they do not make the answer to those questions the con-

dition of their obedience. There may have been a questioning look in the eyes of this little child in the house at Capernaum, as if he would say, "What does the Master want with me, now that he is occupied with his disciples?" But if so, he did not stay to have his question answered. It was enough that the Master had called him. He did not stop to question his right to call him. We are not to repress the spirit of inquiry in children, as if that spirit were wicked. Parents who do that sin against the right and nature of childhood. But we are to teach them that they are not to wait until these questions are answered before they obey, nor obey only so far as they can understand. They are to trust the wisdom of their superiors, and acknowledge their authority to command them without explaining the command. This is the disposition of children. And though the wayward and insubordinate spirit shows itself very early, yet it does not belong to childhood. It is learned from the bad example of those who are older. Obedience comes naturally to the child until he has been corrupted by the insubordinate and ungovernable spirit of others, sometimes his associates, but often by those whose business it is to train him into habits of obedience and subordination.

This childlike spirit of obedience to Christ is essential to entrance into his kingdom. There are commandments written plain and bold at the door

of Christ's kingdom. The command to believe, to repent, to confess his name, to be baptized. These are the yoke which every soul who enters the kingdom must take upon him. Nor must we wait to see the full meaning of them all. Our great question must be, "Lord, *what* wilt thou have me to do?" not "*Why* wilt thou have me to do it?"

And whenever you have this spirit of implicit, unhesitating obedience, whatever else you may lack, whether it be age, or worthiness, or knowledge, or deep convictions of sin, or strong emotions, or confidence in our ability to hold out, you are not far from the kingdom of God. Nothing remains for you to do but rise and enter. To you may be fitly spoken the words of Ananias to Saul, "Why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord," acknowledging in your baptism that Jesus' blood washes you from all your sins, and that henceforth he shall be the Lord and guide of your life.

XIX.

THE VALUE OF FOREIGN MISSIONS.

Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was *there*, prophets and teachers, Barnabas, and Symeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen the foster brother of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. And as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.—
ACTS 13: 1-3.

THIS Antioch in Syria was a city of great eminence and importance. It was beautiful for situation; it was the seat of the empire of the Seleucidæ, and maintained its political and military importance after their empire was overthrown by the Romans. And it was a great commercial center, being the gateway between the East and the West, the meeting-place where the caravans from across the desert unloaded their wares in the ships from across the sea, and were laden by them in turn. For all this, the probability is that Antioch would scarcely be known to history but for another movement which began there, and which at the time seemed to her and to all the world unworthy of notice; namely, the movement for the evangelization of the world. Antioch was the birthplace of Foreign Missions. As the little city of Palos in Spain can never be forgotten, because from it set out that frail fleet which brought this

new world to light, so the larger city of Antioch shall live in history because from it the first missionaries to the heathen world set sail.

This is a good text, then, in which to study the value of Foreign Missions. What are they worth to the church and the world, and in what, particularly does their value consist?

I recognize at once that some, and some too whom we should not expect, are beginning to fear that foreign missions will receive a greater share of our attention and our contributions than is justly their due. They are, it is said, coming into a disproportionate importance, and occupying too much of the church's mind and heart. That would be a singular and, we might say, unnatural occurrence. Unnatural, because it is very unnatural for us to pay more regard to the more remote and consequently less importunate appeals to our benevolence than to those which are nearer and more urgent. The blind man within the camp or the city stands a better chance of getting his bread than the leper who has been banished to the desert, and whose case, however needy, and whose cries, however loud, are too far off to be heard. The heathen are as the lepers who are banished to the other side of the world, and it were a most unexpected and unreasonable thing, if we pay more heed to them than we do to the cases of need which cry in our streets and crowd at our doors.

It is indeed so unreasonable as to be, to me, incredible.

The truth is that we are not lacking so much in charity to the poor and ignorant in our own land as we are in justice. The laborers of our country need their wages paid to them on the great principle of justice rather than necessity; they need also a reasonable protection from the drink evil; they need finally the Gospel of Christ preached to them plainly and practically. All this is far more a matter of justice than of charity. The value of the poor to our country is worth all this. We owe it to them as an honest debt. If we pay them their dues they will need little of charity, and we may well send it abroad. And it is a sort of insult to give them charity while we deny them justice.

Whatever our estimate of the need of Christian benevolence at home, a need certainly that I do not belittle, let not this blind us to the value and duty of sending the Gospel abroad. In order to estimate and to realize that value, let us try first to do that which is so hard for us to do—put ourselves in the place of those to whom the Gospel is sent, become heathen for a moment. We grow a little indignant and contemptuous, I know, at the very thought; we consider ourselves so far above the heathen that the very suggestion of putting ourselves in their places, of becoming even in imagination such as they are, is regarded with a

sort of disdain, as though we were a different and higher order of beings. But we are not so far off from the heathen as we think. It is only a little while since our savage Saxon ancestors preyed upon one another like beasts in their primeval forests. They had plenty of energy, but it was spent chiefly in killing each other. It is hard to find, if it be not impossible to find, in the wilds of Africa a tribe more savage and bloodthirsty than the men from whom we are descended. We have the land of Britain remaining, but the original British were simply slaughtered wholesale, and exterminated utterly by the hordes of Northmen who invaded the country. And from those bloody heathen Northmen we who, forsooth, cannot speak of the heathen but with terms of contempt, are directly descended. Why should it be so hard for us who a little while ago were butchering our fellowmen, and who show by this very contempt of the heathen the remains of that caste spirit which is the bane of heathenism, why should we scout the idea of putting ourselves for a moment in the heathen's place?

Try, then, to think of the value of the Gospel to the heathen. Follow Paul and Barnabas to Antioch in Pisidia, observe how almost the whole city comes together to hear the word of God, see, as the Gentiles hear of God's love for them, how they are glad and glorify the word of God, and read how these disciples from among the heathen are filled

with joy and the Holy Spirit ; or go on with them into the ruder districts of Lystra and Derbe and observe how those crude and brutish people are turned from idols to serve the living God, and with what grateful fidelity they rally about the persecuted missionaries and welcome them to their humble homes. And if you follow the modern missionary in his labors you will see from many such things that heathen missions are of unspeakable value and preciousness to the heathen themselves. If, then, we value those things which enable us to bring joy and blessing to others, we should set a high estimate on foreign missions.

But further than this foreign missions have been the means of giving to the church souls as grand and heroic as the world ever saw. The ministry of Saul and Barnabas is not only a blessing to the heathen, but it is, if possible, still more a blessing to themselves. They are made mightier and worthier men by their mission. There is something ennobling and exalting in this work, so that the man who engages in it heartily and unselfishly begins to tower above the common lot of men in Titanic grandeur and strength.

When these two men came back from their first missionary tour to report to the church from which they had gone out, we know that there were marks of the hardships and sufferings of that ministry upon them. There were the scars and bruises left from their cruel stoning at Lystra. They bore wit-

ness on their bodies of the perils of their ministry. But as they stood up in that assembly to recount their labors and successes, were there no marks of a larger growth upon them also? were there not traces of a faith, a heroism, a zeal for Christ and for men, a moral and spiritual grandeur, which they had not attained to when they set sail from Antioch, and which without this ministry among the heathen they never could have attained? When a few months later these two missionaries went up to Jerusalem and rehearsed what signs and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them, the heroic bearing and spirit of these men deeply impressed the whole assembly, and they were greeted as "men that had hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

From that time on missions among the heathen have developed the grandest heroes of the world's history. Not such heroes indeed as the world has been willing to recognize or acknowledge. Alas! for this world's ideal of heroism! Unless men are mighty to destroy their fellow-men, unless they ride out in the world's view in a chariot whose wheels are stained in blood, unless they make their way through carnage and leave desolation and bitterness in their train, the foolish world refuses to call them great. The world's true heroes are at length coming to be known. The time is coming, aye, is not far off, when the names of Carey, Judson, Moffat and Livingstone, will be the

brightest names in the annals of this nineteenth century, and when the words of Theodore Parker, certainly not prejudiced in favor of missions, will be the verdict of our whole land: "If modern missionary enterprise had done no more than produce one Adoniram Judson it were worth all it cost." But it has produced hundreds like him, heroic in spirit and unfaltering in faith.

The greatest present value of Foreign Missions to the church I conceive to be this: that they are proving our subjection to the spirit and the Word of God; they make the most direct and the heartiest draught on our faith of all the various enterprises to which the church is called. We all know that the stock objection to foreign missions from the day they were started until now is this: their unreasonableness. They were said to be unreasonable because the hope of converting the heathen is a forlorn and foolish hope; because there are enough heathen at home to engage all the energies of the church; because the cost of conducting this work is immense; and because if the heathen are to have the gospel God will see that they get it in his own good time and way. It must be admitted that history weakened this argument greatly at all points, and yet it is so far conclusive, that there is but one complete answer to it, and that is the answer given by the Duke of Wellington to a young curate who was urging this argument against foreign missions, with great force. "Young man,"

said the Duke, "what are your marching orders?" The curate saw the point. "Go teach all nations," was his reply. "Then obey them," said the Iron Duke, "and ask no reasons why." The great cause of missions did not originate with man. Of all the great teachers who have taken upon them the office of enlightening men, not one ever laid on his disciples the duty of taking their teachings to all the world. They would have accounted this a preposterous task. Only that great Teacher sent from God commanded his apostles to make disciples of all nations. So this movement to evangelize the nations which sets out from Antioch, originates not with the church nor any one of its teachers. "Then the Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul to the work whereunto I have called them." The obligation to send the gospel abroad rests on the great commission of Christ and the special inspiration of his Spirit. They were established not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God. And the cause of foreign missions is come now to test the faith of the church, to see whether we will obey this commission and be subject to this word of the Spirit for no other reason than this—the word of the Lord hath said it; whether we are willing to walk wholly by faith, or whether we will refuse to walk ever after the lead of Christ, unless reason and judgment go along to keep our faith company.

The test is a critical one indeed; but the church

which shrank from it at first is proving herself more and more willing to obey the marching orders of her Head and her Captain, whether they run wise in her own eyes or otherwise. And so this cause is revealing to the world that the church's profession to walk by faith is not altogether a false and empty profession, that our professed subjection to the will of Christ is a real and practical subjection; that the place of reason in the church is simply to determine, first what the Lord commands, but never why he commands it.

The point of my appeal to-day is not so much for a large collection for foreign missions, or for the consent of your reason that they are a wise and worthy object of your benevolence. I appeal rather for more positive and practical interest in this cause. I appeal first for a more general interest. The number of Christians actually awakened and interested in this work is mournfully small. It is estimated that not more than one fourth of the church bear any active part in sustaining our missions abroad. This is not only privation to the missions, but it means the chastisement of the church. Just so surely as we confine our sympathies, our affections, our money to ourselves, our homes and our own little world, the hand of God will come among us and strike down these objects of our exclusive affection; or he will refuse to prosper and bless us and cause all our cherished hopes to end in bitter disappointment;

or he will send leanness and barrenness upon our souls.

If we are deaf to the cries of the heathen he may presently silence the songs on our own lips and banish from our lives the sound of laughter and the voice of merriment, and we may be compelled to cry for mercy for ourselves. Therefore let the whole church heed the last great command of its Master, "Go!"

And let us have a permanent interest in this work of the Lord; no more spurts of zeal and fits of liberality, and momentary glimpses of the grandeur of the foreign work, but a steady, resolute, prayerful remembrance of this great object for which God sent his Son into the world and for which he keeps his church in the world, that there may at last be gathered about the throne of God a great multitude which no man can number, of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues, clothed with white robes, and having palms in their hands, and crying in a loud voice, saying, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb."

XX.

DELIGHT IN THE LORD.

Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.—PSALMS 37; 4.

WE ALL know how certain sounds or objects are stamped instantly and indelibly upon the memory so that no flood of passing years can wash them out. We hear certain words or phrases and they ring in our ears and run in our heads, as we are wont to say, to the end of life. Sometimes a sweet strain of music or snatches of an old song or a line of poetry will haunt the memory continually, and we find ourselves singing it or saying it to ourselves all through the hours of the day. So a pleasant face seen for but an instant long ago may be vividly remembered through all the years and would be immediately recognized if it again appeared to us. Other faces, thousands of them, which we have seen since have passed from the memory like a dream, but this remains like a thing of life. So a bit of landscape which broke upon us in a moment while we sat by the window of a rail-car, and as we turned some sharp curve or climbed some mountain-side, may seem to be floating before our eyes at this moment and will remain with us as long as memory lasts.

Now I should render you a valuable service if I did nothing else in this discourse than fix these words of the text fast in your memories so that you might recall them at will and meditate on them at your leisure. "Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart." And if I might make you see the deep yet simple meaning of these words and persuade you to shape your life thereto, I should have preached a sermon worth going a thousand miles to deliver, which I fear is a good deal more than most sermons are worth.

I. Let us observe then, in the first place, that the Lord requires of his servants and his saints that they shall delight themselves in him. We are not only not to fret ourselves because of evil doers, but we are to trust in the Lord and do good. And not only are we to trust in the Lord, but to delight ourselves in him also, and then he shall give us the desires of our hearts. Now this duty of delight in God implies several things.

1. It implies, in the first place, that God is of such a character that he can be delighted in. That means that he must be a good and a gracious God. We can take a certain pleasure in the contemplation of greatness. Every one feels a kind of elevation when he beholds for the first time some object of great majesty and magnitude. The mountains and the sea, because of their vastness, inspire our minds with a sense of admiration and

awe. The great cataract yonder draws visitors from the different places of the earth because of its immense magnitude. How does Niagara differ from the tiniest rivulet that trickles over a ledge of stone in some quiet forest but in this, that it is a million times larger. Its great size makes its majesty. And this also makes the difference between an humble hillock and a towering mountain, between a miniature lake and the multitudinous sea. The pleasure which we take in these things, is the pleasure which comes of the contemplation of mere magnitude. And so far as they declare to us the greatness of God we may take pleasure in that.

But we cannot forget that our admiration for greatness is always moderated and often utterly repressed by the consideration that this greatness is only a greatness which destroys and not which saves. That mother whose child leaped from the arms of its uncle into the cataract's swift current can never think of the greatness of Niagara again without a sigh of distress. To her its mighty power is only a power to destroy. So if the end of the mountains was to execute the vengeance of the Almighty, to fall on the race of man and cover it forever from the wrath of God, the magnitude of the mountains would not attract but appall our hearts. The ancients, who had not learned the art of navigation, and whose timid craft hugged the shore and dared not venture out of sight of land,

did not admire the sea. They feared it and hated it as some terrible monster whose delight was to swallow up the children of men. If we knew nothing of God except his greatness, we might find some pleasure in contemplating that, but we should take no delight in him. Rather, we should be dismayed by terrible anticipations of his destroying power. And the more we realized the greatness and majesty of God the greater would be our concern and alarm. That is why nature can never give us a sufficient revelation of God, why natural religion never can be a joyful religion. It declares God's greatness, but it does not clearly declare the character of that greatness, whether it shall be exercised to destroy men, or whether it is to be employed to save them. When David tells us to delight ourselves in God, we may be sure that he caught some clearer and more comforting vision of him than appears in this visible creation.

We find pleasure also in the contemplation of beauty. The starry heavens, the blue sky, the green earth purpled with myriads of flowers and flecked with fair forests excites our admiration and stirs our emotions. And if we connect these things with the Creator, and think of them as having had their origin in the mind of God, then the beauty of the Lord may impress us deeply. How beautiful, we may say, is the mind of God, if this is its symbol and expression! But this admiration may be checked and these emotions may be

chilled by the reflection that beauty is not mercy. There is no message of sympathy or compassion in a beautiful object. The aurora borealis is beautiful, but you grow cold as you look at it. Appreciation of beauty is not always associated with feelings of humanity and kindness. We have a striking illustration of this in an incident in the French Revolution. In the attack on the Tuilleries, after the king had been arrested and the blood of many innocent victims had been shed, some of the king's friends and courtiers climbed the statuary adorning the palace grounds in hope of escaping the avengers. The Revolutionists would not shoot them as they clung to those beautiful statues for fear of injuring and defacing the statuary. They first thrust and pierced them with their bayonets until they came down and then slaughtered the poor wretches in cold blood. Their love of beauty moved them to spare the statuary while they had no mercy on mankind. This is no exceptional and monstrous instance. Love of beauty and love of mercy have no necessary connection. If nature shows us a God who delights in beauty, it by no means follows from that that he delights in mercy.

But it is because God is revealed to us in Scripture as merciful and gracious, slow to anger, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy, pitying them that fear him as a Father pities his children, taking no pleasure in the death of the wicked, not

willing that any should perish, but willing that all men should be saved, so loving the world as to send his Son to die for it, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life, that we can delight in him. It was the special mission of Jesus to reveal God as a loving Father. His own life was such a revelation. Jesus was a loving and most lovable man, a great heart going about doing good. And himself declares that he is the manifestation of God's disposition to men, so that he says to Philip, when he asked him, "Show us the Father," "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father." In such a God as Jesus Christ reveals, surely the soul of man can take delight.

2. But we must observe also that the duty to delight in God implies not only that God must be of such a character that we can delight in him, but we also must be of such a character that we can delight in him. Christ taught clearly the fatherhood of God but, as has been well said, he did not teach the grandmotherhood of God, which is just what some people mean by his fatherhood. His love is not a mere sentiment of pity for human infirmity and iniquity. It is not what some one calls a "mush of magnanimity." It is a holy love, which can not make light of sin, which loves righteousness and hates iniquity. God loves sinners, it is true. But he does not love them because they

are sinners, but because they are something else beside sinners; because there is a germ of good in every man, and God loves him for that, and his love lays hold on that and seeks to separate it from sin and train it into likeness with himself. If any man were totally depraved, wicked through and through, with no seed of righteousness remaining in him, he would be totally lost to the love of God. It is because there is some trace of God's image still left in every man, however faint it may be in some, that the message of God's love is proclaimed for all.

But in order to delight in this love of God we must first trust it and then obey the commands which that love lays upon us. We can not delight in the Lord while we yet delight in sin. For that would be to delight in our own destruction. The very task which the love of God has set itself is to destroy sin from the face of the universe. And in doing this that love must destroy the sinner also unless he will separate himself from sin. So long as he is joined to that idol he must perish with it. And no man can delight in his own perdition. To delight in the Lord he must renounce his sin and leave it to be consumed of the wrath of God.

Is not this the reason that so many of the professed servants of the Lord do not find delight in his service? They are conscious of clinging to certain sins, holding to them as Israel held to their idols, hiding them in their tents, building secret

altars for their worship, even after they had sworn to renounce idolatry and worship Jehovah alone. So long as they did this they could have no delight in his service, knowing his judgment against idolatry. So if we would find delight in the Lord we must fully forswear our sins and serve the Lord with our whole heart and soul. If this be our character, if submission and surrender to the love of God is complete, then will we rejoice in him; his will must be our choice, his word our law, his service our delight.

II. Turn now to the second part of this text. If we delight in the Lord he will give us the desires of our hearts. Because then our desires will be such as may be granted without injury either to ourselves or our fellows. We shall then desire only such things as may be granted consistently with the will of God and the welfare of mankind. Let us suppose the case of a subject who is singly devoted to the will and welfare of his sovereign, that he has no wish that does not look to that sovereign's interest and honor. Might it not be said of a servant who so delighted in his master that because of that delight he should have the desires of his heart? Since he cherished no desire that was alien to his master's good, all his desires might be granted with impunity. Such a subject the great Cyrus is said to have had, to whom he was so devoted and in whose loyalty to himself he had such confidence, that he declared no desire of

that servant should be denied, and that if he lacked means to grant his petitions he would melt down his golden throne and coin it into gifts to gratify such a faithful friend. When we are as loyal and as faithful to Jesus Christ as this man was to his master, then will our heart's desire and prayer be heard.

It is recorded of John Chrysostom, the great Christian preacher and orator of the fourth century, that when some of his contemporaries desired him to give them some simple rules for a holy life, he summed them all up in this one: "Love Christ and do as you please." He lived in days when men were letting go Christ and laying hold on rites and rules for salvation and cumbering the Christian life with intolerable burdens. His wise counsel was: "Discard rules and be elevated to Christ." Is it not the counsel of David in another form, "Delight thyself in the Lord and he will give thee the desires of thine heart?" Ministers are sometimes brought by their young people especially, to lay down certain rules of conduct in respect to certain popular amusements. Is there any wiser answer for them than that of the faithful fourth century preacher, "Love Christ and do as you please?" or that of the psalmist, "Delight thyself in the Lord and he will give thee the desires of thine heart?" Only be sure that your delight is not in your own pleasure, not in the indulgence of your own tastes and appetites, but in

the law of the Lord, that the love of Christ constrains you and the honor of his cause is your deepest desire, and you shall not go astray.

If there ever lived a man who delighted in the Lord, that man was Paul. All of Paul's desires were centered in the name of his Master. One of the deepest of these desires was to preach the gospel at Rome, that great center of power and learning. For a time that desire of Paul's heart seemed doomed to disappointment. Instead of going to Rome he went to prison; instead of striking the shackles of ignorance and idolatry from the benighted city he was himself bound with chains of iron. For all this, this desire to see Rome was granted, and granted in such a way that he afterwards confesses that his going to Rome as a prisoner had turned out more to the furtherance of the gospel than if he had been suffered to enter the city as a free man.

So, my friends, of the deep desires of your heart. If they are inspired by your delight in the Lord, in God's time and in God's way they shall be satisfied. Some of us desire our own growth in grace, in knowledge and in holiness; some of us desire the conversion of our friends, or, if they are professing Christians, we desire them to be more active and joyful in His service; some of us desire the peace, the unity, the prosperity of the church, and the union of the present divided household of Christendom; some of us desire the extension of

the gospel over the earth and the coming of that day of salvation when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ, that he may reign forever. Be of good cheer and faint not. "Delight thyself in the Lord also; and he will give thee the desires of thine heart."

XXI.

THE REFLEXIVE RESULTS OF FOREIGN MISSIONS.

God is able to make all grace abound unto you, that you, having all sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work.—2 COR. 9: 8.

THE teaching of these words is that besides the direct effect of obedience to Christ's will, which is the honor of our Master and the benefit of our kind, there is an indirect and reflexive result on the obedient which strengthens their character and increases their willingness and power to obey. "God is able to make all grace abound unto you, that you, having all sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work." These words may furnish me a theme whose simplicity I will not disguise by any novelty either in statement or argument. I propose to rehearse before you once more some of the advantages which accrue to the Church from the faithful prosecution of the great cause of foreign missions. The subject is already old, but even yet so far from exhausted that I can only hope to coast along its headlands, touching at some of the most prominent and important points, from which we may get a distant and imperfect survey of a work of which, if every sentence of this address could be expanded into a

volume, we might still say the half has never been told: for we are just coming to see the immense importance of the work of foreign missions. Those who have seen Mont Blanc tell us that you do not appreciate its magnitude when you stand under its shadow in the vale of Chamouni. It is only when you have retreated to the shores of Lake Geneva, fifty miles away, that the great height towers up and spreads out before you in its vast proportions, and lies there in the celestial spaces like a world in itself. The foreign mission work is yet young. It is only a little while ago that its foundations were laid, or rather, discovered, after being so long overlaid, and the work of building Christ's universal kingdom renewed. We are only now beginning to see how vast and high a work it is, how vital to the existence of the Church and to the interest of the whole race.

Especially is this true of the reflexive result of foreign missions. The men who, less than a hundred years ago, took their lives in their hands and went to preach Christ to the heathen, did not think much of the effect of their mission on those whom they left behind them. They had respect for the heathen's miserable condition.

They saw them as the apostles saw them, lying out in wickedness, having no hope, and without God in the world; they beheld the nations of men as our Lord saw the multitudes, faint and scattered, and as sheep having no shepherd, and, like

the Lord, they were moved with compassion at the sight. More than everything else they regarded the great command and commission of Christ to evangelize the world.

They were constrained by the authority and the love of Christ.

Every man of them had come to regard his will as supreme above all things, and could say, in the words of the great Moravian leader, Zinzendorf: "I have but one passion. It is He—He alone."

But they did not dream that the most immediate, and certainly not the least salutary result of their work would be the quickening, the deepening and the widening of the sluggish current of the Church's life. This they have done, and the work is beyond estimate.

If they had done nothing to magnify Christ's name among the heathen, if they had never turned one soul from idols to serve the living God, if they had brought no strength and solace to themselves, if the good they had done were measured only by what has been wrought in the hearts and lives of those from whom they went out, still they had not lived and suffered their heroic lives in vain. The reflexive results of foreign missions are of surpassing interest and priceless value.

1. Foreign missions have done invaluable service to the Church in restoring to its proper and original place the authority of its Head and Lord. The nerve of missions is the spirit of implicit obe-

dience. The eye of the risen Lord as he stands on the mountain and beholds the growing and ripening fields beneath him glances away to the wide, white fields of humanity, and he leaves with his disciples the great commission to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. The commandment is so exceedingly broad that it took Simon Peter, whose mind was perhaps of larger mold than any of the others, about ten years to get up to that height from which he could see its meaning, if, indeed, he had not to the last a more or less clouded vision of the great truth that "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him." If, then, they perceived the extent of their commission so slowly, still less did they see any underlying reason for it except the will of Him to whom "all authority is given in heaven and in earth." They were not drawn out from the world by their interest in the heathen, but driven out by the word of the Lord. Yet so mighty was that constraint that Paul could say before his departure, The gospel has gone into the whole habitable world.

But the rationalizing influence presently pervaded the Church, chilled the spirit of obedience, and checked the progress of the gospel.

The rationalizing tendency is indeed not peculiar to any age or sect, but inheres in our human nature, and therefore has its place and mission.

But that mission is not to reduce the gospel to a system of philosophy and conform the commands of Christ to the canons of human reason. To such a task the leaders of the Church set themselves, and even flattered themselves that they had performed it.

Christianity was reduced to a series of propositions. God, its Author, was duly differentiated into trinity, and subdivided into attributes. Christ, its head and life, was made to sit again as a child at the feet of the doctors. The offense of the cross was done away in a philosophy of the atonement. And so for all the rest. The builders of a systematic and rational theology had indeed raised for themselves "a monument more lasting than brass and higher than the regal structure of the pyramids;" but like the tower of Babel, it was a monument reared out of the ruins of faith.

The very life of the gospel was ground out between the upper and nether millstone of major and minor premise. Jewish rulers, who resisted the words of Stephen, supposed that they had God confined in their little temple, and laid violent hands on him who with his hammer of God's word dared to beat down its venerable doors and walls and let Jehovah escape among the Gentiles. So the rulers in spiritual Israel thought to shut up God in a syllogism, and showered, not stones, indeed, but sneers and insults on those who perceived and proclaimed a wideness in God's love

not dreamed of in their philosophy. But God, who dwelleth not in a form of stones or in a form of words, brings the wisdom of men to naught and publishes his love abroad.

And what authority there was remaining to the Church was divided between Christ himself and the leaders of Christian thought. Always the number of those who accept a system intelligently is small with those who adhere to it, because it comes to them commended and endorsed by great and worthy names. The right of private judgment requires more labor and courage for its exercise than most men are willing to give. The judgment of one receives the consent of the many; and so that one, often against his own will and protest, is invested with an authority which belongs to Christ alone. The doctrines of the gospel are then sustained, not by an appeal to Christ and the apostles, but by citations from creeds and fathers.

Now when, after being so long cast out and by such means, the spirit of missions returned to the Church, the missionaries did not make their appeal to the reason of the age; they did not seek for their enterprise any basis in philosophy; they did not ask the consent of Luther or Calvin to go to the heathen. They plead only the authority of the Lord. They heard only Christ's charge to his Church to disciple his nations. "Step by step, with many voices crying right and left," they climbed their way back to the great commission,

and heard once more the voice of the Lord bidding them out into all the world. And into all the world they went, hearing such epithets flung after them (from the lips of Christ's ministers they came) as "consecrated cobblers" and "pious madmen." But they went on rejoicing, like their brethren, the apostles, that they were counted worthy to suffer shame and dishonor for the name of Christ.

And what hath God wrought by those humble and faithful men? Among many other blessings, they have brought into the hearts of disciples a profounder regard for the authority of the Lord; they have taught us to be good soldiers of Jesus Christ, and to have the soldier's obedience.

"Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why—
Theirs but to do and die,"

if only they may obey the great Captain's orders. Their work has brought out such an assertion of Christ's authority as Christians are bound to respect. Ever since old John Erskine startled his assembly of Scotch divines as they were about to vote the missionary enterprise "impracticable and visionary," by "ratching" his Bible and thundering into their unbelieving ears the great gospel of Go! the Church has been steadily learning a stricter subjection and obedience to Christ.

And yet it is not a slavish obedience which the work of missions promotes,—a sullen submission

to inexorable will. It is the constraint of a great affection; it is a grateful consent to the sovereignty of the Crucified. Authority is suffused with mercy, and fortified in a heart of love. Christ is the head of the Church because he loved it and gave himself for it.

This appeal to the authority of Christ ought to have weight in this gathering. You have used it with effect on one injunction of the commission. This commission enjoins you to baptize those who believe in the gospel. And baptism, you say, is an act plainly described in the New Testament.

If any one refuse that baptism, you can not consort with him. He may plead his good intentions, his good conscience, his good character; but you will not consent, even for conscience or character's sake, to set aside the authority of Christ. "You must go down into the water, brother." Well, turn that same reasoning on the other end of the commission and go into all the world, if not for reason's sake and for conscience's sake, then certainly for Christ's sake. Else, for consistency's sake, let your baptism logic go to the winds and dry up the Jordan of your argument.

2. Another result which has come to the Church from its foreign missions is a renewal of its energy and an increase of its activity. Christians begin once more to abound in the work of the Lord.

The spectacle of Christianity, in the last half of the eighteenth century especially, was so forlorn

and humiliating that infidelity was more open and defiant than it can ever dare to be again. Hume predicted the speedy decay of Christianity, and imagined that he already saw the signs of its approaching dissolution. Voltaire, with characteristic self-conceit, declared that the Christian faith which had been established by twelve men should now be overturned by one. Tom Paine, on his completion of his "Age of Reason," boasted that he had cut down every tree in Paradise. The fears and faults of believers gave point and plausibility to these vaunting words when a more aggressive faith might have laughed them all to scorn. The Church of that time had hardly faith enough left to keep it alive, and could poorly repel the assaults of its enemies.

Those were dark days in England when the great Blackstone, after hearing every noted preacher in London, had to confess he got no gospel from any. The clergy of the Establishment were stricken with the blight of deism, while in many of the chapel pulpits St. John of the Gospels and epistles had been supplanted by the St. John of the institutes. And far worse than any infidelity or heresy was the indifference and inertia into which the Church was sunk. This is heresy in the heart, canker in the blood, dry rot in the soul. Luther supposed in his day that the work of the Church was done, and exclaims impatiently as the signs of the renaissance began to spring up about him: "The

arts are growing as if there was to be a new start and the world was to become young again. I hope God will finish it. We have already come to the white horse. Daniel's four empires, Babylonia, Persia, Greece, Rome, are gone. Another hundred years and all will be over. God's word will disappear for want of any to preach it. Mankind will turn into epicureans and care for nothing. They will not believe that God exists. Then his voice will be heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom cometh.' " But the bridegroom did not come, and in another two hundred years the bride has ceased to expect him or prepare the earth for his presence; there lay the old ship of Zion (if you can suffer this venerable figure once more) stranded amid skepticism, sectarianism and indifference, many fearing she had come to the end of her voyage. Then broke in upon her the tide of missionary enthusiasm, bore her back to her appointed course, and set her on her way once more in her cruise of the world.

It would be unfair and untrue to ascribe the revival of the Church's energy to the work of missions alone. The latter end of the last century was fruitful of great ideas and great enterprises.

The Sunday-school movement, in which the historian Green finds the beginnings of popular education in England, took its rise in this period. And other kindred movements led by kindred

spirits sprang up in those most prolific years of English history.

But evangelism is the life and support of all Christian work.

As Alexander Duff has said, "The church which ceases to be evangelistic soon ceases to be evangelical." And the church which ceases to be evangelical must soon cease to be anything. For there is no sufficient motive outside of the gospel of Christ to incite to any serious and sustained effort in the world's behalf. If there is, what is it? Name it who can. Our commission reads to all the world, and God will not bless us in a partial execution of it. The Church must stretch out her hands to the earth, or else they shall fall nerveless and helpless at her side, prospered in nothing.

They struggle vainly to maintain a part of the commission who have not the courage to contend for all. So much the Church is learning under the lead of her missionaries.

3. Foreign missions have exalted the word and advanced the work of the Lord. Then, also, they have enriched the history of the Church with the most magnificent examples of heroic character.

Grander men than her missionaries have never crossed the stage of human history. Had there been no Philip there would have been no Demosthenes, runs our proverb.

So it is always. Luther no more made the

Reformation than the Reformation made Luther. Had there been no pope there would have been no Protestant. The heroes of the mission field, who are destined to stand on a level with Luther, if indeed they do not rise above him, became what they were through what they did. Without their work they would be as mute and inglorious as common men.

Take the great character of Paul. He was the first missionary to the heathen, and his example not only inflamed the zeal of the first disciples, but it flashes like lightning through the centuries, and ever and anon kindles fresh fires of enthusiasm in the bosom of the Church. What made Paul? He was a genius to begin with, the only man yet born who could lead that mighty revolution whereby the nations of the world were to be turned from idols to serve the living God.

Then he was trained for his mission in the school of Providence.

He was likewise called to it in an extraordinary manner, arrested and bound to it, as one might say, by an indissoluble and eternal tenure. He was beside all inspired for it, that is, lifted above the limitations of this earthen body and this earthen world to a height from which he saw men's relations to God and to one another with something of that clearness and wideness of vision with which God himself beholds them. But for all this, that Paul who first preached Christ in

the synagogues of Damascus, was an infant beside the titanic soul who, some thirty years later, stood on one of the seven hills of Rome, looking back over a finished life and forward to a fadeless crown. The great deeds of Paul were done among the Gentiles, the great words of Paul were called forth in his abounding zeal and labors on behalf of the heathen. The discourse on Mars Hill could never have been uttered had Paul's ministry been confined to his own nation.

The epistle to the Romans is a direct product of the missionary spirit, a profound argument, an impassioned plea for the free offer of mercy to the world. This points to missions as its source.

Pause, and I will show you a system a thousandfold grander.

Far out on the ocean, sleeping placidly on the bosom of its mother wave, is the unconscious waterdrop. For it the drooping flower is dying. Apart it rocks idly for a mission. Dropped into the thirsty flower-mouth, it fills a purpose and causes it to blush with grateful beauty. How does the Divine Inventor solve the physical problems involved in its transfer? It is 800 times heavier than the surrounding atmosphere. How raise it? From the quiver of the sun arrows of light are shot into it; it expands 1,300 times its original size. Made lighter by expansion, air particles get their shoulders under it and lift it into cooler altitudes where it condenses into clouds of

acres in extent. But how move the clouds over the plains? No human hand can reach them. Ho, yonder comes God's fleet, the cloud ships, the air currents that have touched at the port of Cloudland. Laden with watery stores they are scudding along through the upper deep.

Have you never stood and contemplated that a life spent in fruitless regrets and unmanly repinings is not worthy to be compared with that plodding, devoted, disinterested man who through these same years, in unceasing labor and untold privation, is publishing the gospel of peace to the poor Karens of Burmah? The world does not yet consent to this, but when that better time shall come, for which even Gibbon prays, when the thirst of military glory will no longer be the vice of the most exalted genius, because mankind will no longer bestow more liberal applause on their destroyers than on their benefactors, then the humble American missionary shall outshine the imperial Frenchman. The beginning of that blessed period is already upon us. David Livingstone, who refused to be called by any other title than missionary to Africa, is now acknowledged on all hands as a prince among men. England laid the body of the heroic missionary to rest in her historic abbey among her statesmen, her divines, her scholars, her patriots, her warriors, her kings, as one equally worthy with them all of a place in that venerable sepulcher.

The men who are gone out from among us as missionaries to the heathen, whose names are so familiar and so dear to many of us, are not only enlarging their labors from year to year, but they are growing great with their work and building up strong and glorious characters which for us and for our children will be a heritage of inestimable value.

4. The spirit of implicit obedience, diligence in the discharge of our great commission, and an army of saints and martyrs whose influence remains to refresh and inspire the Church like the streams which flow through the land when the clouds that gave them are gone—these are some of the reflexive results of the great work for whose advancement we are met to-night. Permit me now one point of application. I do not presume to exhort the “good gray heads” whose presence among us is our honor and our joy. But those my equals in age and my juniors may suffer the word of exhortation.

You are ambitious, my brethren, to be faithful ministers of Jesus Christ and true servants of his Church. You desire to live again when you are gone, in lives made better by your presence as well as yonder in the presence of the Lord. You can not render better service to the Church than to endear to its heart the cause of missions. It is no light and easy task, to be sure. Missions have cost us much in money; they have cost us more in

the sacrifice of heroic men; but the great item of cost and labor is the awakening of the Church to its responsibility for the evangelization of the world.

It does not take half so much either of pains or expense to get the heathen to hear the gospel as it does to get Christians to send it. We can get the money into the hands of the missionaries easy enough if we could only get it out of the pockets of the brethren at home.

The beginning of modern missions in England is associated with two names of almost equal honor. William Carey, planting his Master's kingdom in India, plays hardly a nobler part than Andrew Fuller, staying at home that he may rally the hosts of the Church to Brother Carey's support. If we can not all be William Careys, let us all at least be Andrew Fullers. But you can not stir up the Church by an occasional discourse on missions, however eloquent or masterly that may be. You must be so filled and charged with the spirit of missions that it will leak out and slop over in every sermon.

Fear not to be taunted with riding the missionary hobby. This hobby goes somewhere, at any rate. When you find a hobby that rides you out into all the world, set the whole Church on behind and let us all take a ride.

The part assigned to us who take the lead in the work of the Church has a noble illustration in

German history. After the campaigns of Napoleon, Prussia, like so many of the kingdoms of Europe, lay prostrate and exhausted under the blows of her enemy, almost nothing left of her but her dogged and dauntless temper and the resolve to restore her fallen fortunes. This resolve she breathed into the bosom of her school-masters. The humiliation of her ancient enemy, the unity of the German nations, and the supremacy of Prussia, were the lessons taught in her schools. And when the fullness of her time came, when Napoleon the last and the least essayed the office of the first and would-be arbiter and master of all Europe, Prussia mustered her forces and led them on to easy victory, because under banners, in the rank and file of her armies, behind her needle guns, was the old German school-master, fighting the foes and winning back the liberties of his fatherland, restoring her bulwarks and extending her boundaries. O pastors and parents, teachers and leaders in Christ's kingdom! yours is the office and the honor to restore the Church its ancient ambition of conquest, its apostolic enthusiasm of extension, to raise, to train, to sustain the armies that are to plant the standard of the cross in the ends of the earth, and establish among men that period of glorious promise, "when the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ; and he shall reign forever!"

XXII.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it; and he gave to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took a cup, and gave thanks, and gave to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many unto remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.—MATT. 26: 26-29.

THE simple and natural manner in which the Lord's Supper was instituted has led some to overlook its solemnity and significance. Men are accustomed to establish great and permanent institutions with great ceremony and conspicuous demonstrations. They choose a special occasion for the deliverance of the sacred doctrine or rite and usher it in with appropriate accompaniments and acclamations. But here the Lord's Supper comes in so quietly and naturally that it seems hardly more than an incident in the celebration of the Passover Supper. As a devout Jew Jesus is celebrating with the rest of his people that great miracle of judgment upon their oppressors and mercy upon themselves, the slaughter of the first-born of the Egyptians, in which the bondage of Israel was broken and their national life and freedom were begun. It was the custom to celebrate

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the Passover by families. It was a family festival, a private, rather than a public, celebration. Jesus assembles his disciples into an upper room and constitutes them his family, presides over them as the head and keeps the feast in that familiar manner to which they were all so well accustomed. The Master, as head of the house, commenced the holy supper with a blessing or thanksgiving prayer; a cup of wine was then passed around and all the company partook; then followed the bitter herbs, usually eaten with a kind of sauce and taken in memory of their bitter bondage among the heathen; then the unleavened bread was passed, at which time it was the duty of the head of the house to explain to the younger members of the family the meaning of the Passover institution. After this a Psalm was sung; then the paschal lamb was eaten and another cup of wine was taken, the supper closing with the chanting of another part of the same Psalm. It was at the distribution of the unleavened bread, we may suppose, or, as some think, when the whole supper was concluded, that Jesus took the bread, and after giving thanks for it took it and gave it to his disciples, saying: "Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you." In like manner, also, the cup after they had supped, saying: "This is the new covenant in my blood shed for many for the remission of sins. Drink ye all of it." Did Jesus intend by this action to originate the ordinance of

the Lord's Supper as we now have it and to bind its observance on all who should believe on him henceforth through all the ages, or was it meant simply as a prophecy of his death and an exhortation to his disciples that as often as they kept the Passover in coming years, they should associate the feast with the memory of his martyrdom at the hands of his countrymen? We know how the church understood it. They kept the Supper as an ordinance which had been delivered to them by Christ. They were accustomed to meet together on the first day of the week to commemorate the Lord's sufferings and death, as we learn not only from the inspired record but from the earliest uninspired history of the Church which has come down to us. And added to that we have the testimony of the Apostle Paul that the obligation to observe the Lord's Supper was a part of the revelation which was given to him from the presence of the Lord. "That which I received of the Lord, I also delivered unto you, how that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks for it, broke it and gave to his disciples and said, Take, eat; this do ye in remembrance of me. And in like manner also the cup." The Lord's Supper is not, therefore, a thing of man's device. It is not an expedient of the early church; a venerable relic which has come down to us from a far-off age, which has therefore hallowed associations but no proper authority; it

is not even an apostolic institution. But it proceeds from the Lord himself. Even if we knew no more about it than this, that Jesus has left it to his disciples, all his true followers would find a holy delight in keeping it, and would be restrained by their regard for him from treating it with negligence or indifference. A small thing it seems—this assembly of believers together and the distribution of these emblems among them—but when it is connected with the dear and worthy name of Christ it becomes of sacred and precious significance. The divine origin of the Lord's Supper exalts and endears it in the hearts of all the faithful.

I. But the significance of the Lord's Supper appears most eminently in its object. And when we come to study that object we enter at once upon controverted ground. It is stoutly maintained, not by Roman Catholics alone, but by many who are accounted as good Protestants, that we have in the celebration of this holy supper the enactment of a miracle by which the bread and wine become the real body and blood of Christ. These tell us that the words, "This is my body" are to be taken literally, and so we have here an exhibition of the very body in which Christ lived and died and the blood which he shed on the cross; that in the consecration of these elements by the hands of the officiating priest there is a transformation of them into the substance of that body

and blood; and hence in this holy communion there is an actual participation in the body and blood of the Lord. This doctrine, as I have said, is not confined to Romanists, but is held in substance by several sects of Protestants, and by many in almost every sect. Luther, the pioneer and peerless Protestant, did not protest against this doctrine of the physical presence of Christ in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, but accepted it heartily and contended for it fiercely. It is true he modified it somewhat, calling it consubstantiation instead of transubstantiation; but the practical difference between these two is not worth considering. Both agree that there is present in the bread and wine the real flesh and blood of Christ. This is the rock on which the Lutheran reformation split into several pieces. The Swiss division of it, under the lead of Zwingli, took one view, the French adopted another, while the German division held on to the doctrine of their leader that there is a real bodily presence of Christ in the bread and wine.

In a famous controversy between Luther and Zwingli, the Swiss reformer held that the words, "This is my body" are figurative, meaning, "This represents my body," while Luther held to the literal interpretation. Luther in that dispute completely lost his temper and raved like a madman. He at length wrote on the table about which they were sitting: "*Hoc est corpus*" (Latin for "this is

my body”), and pounding furiously upon it with his fist, declared he would die by that sentence. There are multitudes of people to-day pounding that same text and declaring that if we do not interpret it literally and take it word for word just as it is, we wrest the Scripture and do violence to the word of God.

Let us see if this charge is true ; if when we say the words “ this is my body ” mean “ this represents my body,” we are explaining away the plain sense of Scripture. How would the disciples as they recline about the paschal feast in that upper room likely understand the words ? Picture the scene ; the Master and his disciples celebrating the feast together ; in the course of the celebration Jesus takes the loaf of unleavened bread in his hands, gives thanks for it, breaks it and gives it to his disciples, saying, “ Take, eat ; this is my body, broken for you.” How did they interpret those solemn words ? Did they suppose a miracle was performed with their utterance by which the bread was actually transformed into the body of Christ ; that in the instant of his saying those words the bread which he held in his hand became of one substance with the hand, so that he could say that the bread was as truly his body as the hand was his body ? If he had immediately vanished from their presence, as he did afterwards from the two disciples at Emmaus, such an interpretation would have been possible, if not natural.

But as long as he remained palpably and visibly with them, such a literal interpretation of his words would never enter their minds. They surely understood these words, with the act which accompanied them, as a striking prediction of his death on the cross, the breaking and tearing of his body and the pouring out of his blood, even as the bread was now broken and the wine poured out before their eyes.

Moreover, it will be observed that after the wine has been called his blood by the Lord, he again drops the figurative description of it and calls it wine or the fruit of the vine, saying to them: "I will not drink of this fruit of the vine till I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." Showing plainly that in calling it his blood he had only been using a figure of speech. The argument is that by the word of Christ the wine was changed into the blood of Christ; but the answer is that after he has said of the cup, "This is the new covenant in my blood," he speaks of the same cup as still wine, or the fruit of the vine, showing that he had used before in saying "This is my blood," a figurative expression. The expression "This is my body," is a symbolic and not a literal expression.

We ought to be able to see this clearly if we will consider that this figurative manner of speaking was characteristic of our Lord. Remember, for instance, when he stood by the lake of Galilee and spoke to the assembled multitude in parables.

He pointed to a field on the hillside which sloped up from the lake, where doubtless at that moment a sower was casting seed on the ground, and said, "That field is the world." "That seed is the word of truth." Then he described how an enemy might come in the night time and sow tares upon that same ground, and how as they sprang up the difference between the tares and the wheat would be manifest. Then he explains: the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the world. We all know what he means and what he does not mean. He did not mean that that little section of Galilean hillside was the whole world; that the seeds as they fell were so many words of truth, or as they sprang up were so many of his disciples; that the young tares were so many little devils; that the malicious man that sowed tares in his neighbor's field was the devil himself, or that the harvest of that field was the end of the world. What he meant was that one is a figure of the other; represents the other. Why should we understand him differently when he speaks in similar language of the institution of the holy supper?

The customs of our common speech should teach us better. When this beautiful building in which we gather to-day was finally planned, one of the brethren, whose zeal in the matter ought be had in

everlasting remembrance, brought the plans around for my inspection, saying, as he held up a roll of broad sheets before me, "This is our new church." I am not bright in matters of architecture. But I understood him. I did not suppose that he had the new church done up in a paper package and carrying it around in his buggy or under his arm; that he was about to spread the whole building out on my lap. I am not quick at catching ideas that approach so nearly to mathematics, and so he had to go over it in detail; saying this is the basement, this the infant class room, this the parlors, this is the study, this is the audience room and so on. But of course I did not take him so literally as to think that our new church was simply a paper church. I knew he was speaking figuratively, and meant that this is a likeness of the church; this represents the church. And yet when we come to interpret the Scriptures we cast away all our common sense and begin to grow red in the face if any one seeks to gainsay us, reiterating that "it means what it says and it says what it means," and that any other view of it is a perversion of the plain word of Scripture.

Is it not plain, then, that the Lord's Supper is not a communication to us of the literal body and blood of Christ, but a communication of the redeeming love which was manifest in the breaking of that body and the shedding of that blood? "Do this, as oft as ye do it, in remembrance of me."

The great purpose of the institution is to make us realize by this palpable and significant symbol the love of God as revealed in the sending of his Son to die, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. The mind and the heart need this sign in order to appreciate more truly and deeply the great truth which it stands for. The use of such symbols for the same end is one of the commonest customs of life. You all know by what a significant symbol the great services of Washington are commemorated to his countrymen. In plying up and down the Potomac the steamboats, great and small alike, toll their bells as they pass Mount Vernon, to remind us that here lived and here is laid to his rest our great captain and father, Washington. And the preservation of that venerable mansion, with the steady pilgrimage to it of thousands of his countrymen, serves to keep in our minds the virtues and the counsels of our great chieftain. It may seem to some a needless and empty ceremony. But no one who witnesses it can fail to realize more fully and to feel his emotions of patriotism and gratitude newly and profoundly stirred as he hears those tolling bells or beholds with his own eyes the home of Washington. The erection of monuments is for the same purpose. We often lament the foolish and prodigal display of marble in our cemeteries. And it is a lamentable waste of the Lord's money so far as the persons commemorated

are unworthy of their monuments and will soon be forgot in spite of their monuments. But in so far as the monument is a commemoration of true worth, of virtue, of piety, of patriotism, of philanthropy, of love for God and men; so far as it helps to render these things more memorable and honorable; so far as it brings us to realize our debt of gratitude to the benefactors of our race and age, it is a most appropriate and praiseworthy memorial, which not only expresses our appreciation of true service and worth, but serves to perpetuate the memory of such through coming generations and transmit the examples of heroism to children's children. "The heroic sacrifice of one single man may not only rally a whole wavering host, but may even flash like lightning through the centuries and kindle in a whole nation a flame of holy enthusiasm." Such deeds are worthy of commemoration in brass and in marble, and must needs be commemorated not only in history, but in significant symbol, that they may be realized by posterity.

How fitting, then, that the death of Jesus Christ, the capital event in the history of the world, the sublimest deed on record, the most beneficent and gracious and affecting display of self-sacrifice and of redeeming love which has been witnessed in this universe, should be commemorated by this simple and significant monument, the breaking of bread and the pouring of wine, in token of his



broken body and his shed blood. The design of this supper is not only to express our gratitude for his redemption and to confess our obligations to serve him continually, but to show forth his death to the world; to proclaim to all who may witness it the great importance and meaning of this sacrificial death and the duty of all to appropriate it by faith. Nor can we so fully realize any of these things except by a frequent and faithful observance of this festival of love.

III. Suffer one or two points now concerning the proper observance of the Lord's Supper; for the apostle warns us against an improper and unworthy observance. He tells us that we may so observe it as to eat and drink condemnation to ourselves; and that because of a heartless partaking of the supper many are weak and sick among us, and many asleep. Spiritual weakness, illness, death, are the results of keeping this feast unworthily. To be truly kept, the Lord's Supper must be kept in faith. We must eat and drink, discerning not in the symbols, but through them and beyond them, the Lord's body and blood; the Lord's sacrifice and death for our sins. We must not see in this bread only a means of satisfying our appetite, building up our bodies; bread and nothing more. We must not, as the Corinthians did, turn this into a common meal, leaving out of view its true import and lesson. Our hearts and thoughts must go behind these symbols and be-

yond them to that great fact of atonement and redemption which they set forth. That is, we must guard against a merely formal observance of it and keep it in sincerity and in truth. We must see by the eye of faith the Crucified One rising out of these emblems and giving his life for his own.

Then the proper observance of this supper requires that we should partake of it with love for one another. Let us not deceive ourselves here. There can be no true communion of the body and blood of Christ in faith unless we commune with one another in love. If we truly love Christ we must feel our hearts drawn to every one who wears his name and his image. We must not love sin in any, it is true, not even in our own brethren, but we must have in our hearts that charity which forgives and covers sins. This unloving spirit between brethren is the thing rebuked by the apostle in the Corinthians. It had come to be so in that church that the poor looked up to the rich with envy, and the rich looked down upon the poor with scorn. In that state of heart they were unworthy to partake of the Lord's Supper. Every one who ate and drank in that unworthy spirit ate and drank to his own condemnation. Do not miss the meaning of this. The idea is not that there is some mysterious sanctity about the Lord's Supper which makes it wickedness and impiety to approach it with an unloving heart, but that the plain meaning of this ordinance is such that we

can not partake of it in hostility to a fellow Christian, in an unforgiving and unloving spirit without condemning ourselves in the very act. What do we in the celebration of the Lord's Supper? We not only proclaim that God forgives us for Christ's sake, but that it is, therefore, our duty to forgive one another even as God has for Christ's sake forgiven us, and so to be imitators of God as dear children. Every time we partake of the Lord's Supper we formally and solemnly proclaim the duty of Christian forbearance and forgiveness. But if by the act of participation we make formal proclamation of this duty, while in heart and in practice we deny it, do we not plainly condemn ourselves in the act? We eat and drink to our own condemnation, just as when we read this precept of forgiveness in our daily reading of the Bible, but refuse to obey it, we read to our condemnation, or when we pray God to forgive our sins but refuse to forgive one another, we pray to our own condemnation. The doing of one duty while repudiating another equally plain and equally obligatory, not only can not save us, but really adds to our condemnation. We must either repudiate all or own all. What we all need is a heart so full of love for the Master that every unholy affection will be expelled; that we will have no room in it for any feeling which offends his love. If Christ dwells in us as the hope of glory, that blessed hope should "weed all bitter-

ness from our breast. It hath no business where he is a guest." The great business and duty with us is to be filled with the spirit of Christ so that all unworthy feeling will be displaced and we shall be able to bring every thought into captivity and obedience to him.

XXIII.

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH.

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.—1 COR. 3: 11.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.—1 Cor. 15: 58.

No thoughtful observer of the temper and tendency of the time can fail to discern a considerable and increasing sentiment in the church looking to some more practical and visible union of Christians than at present obtains. But it is very easy, especially for those who share this sentiment, to exaggerate its strength and growth. Reformers are necessarily noisy. They have "to cry aloud and spare not" against existing evils. But we must not forget that all agitation is not advance, and we can not measure the progress of any movement by the noise which it makes in the world. As a matter of fact the friends of Christian union are yet a very small minority. The great majority are either indifferent or hostile to it. And perhaps the most immediate service which we can render the cause is to bring our minds to a clearer apprehension and appreciation of the grounds of this hostility and indifference.

I can think of at least four reasons which incline the majority of people to look with disapproval upon the agitation of the question of Christian union. First, there are those who think the existence of the church an evil, though perhaps a necessary evil, and therefore it is good policy to keep it divided and so keep it weak. If the church can not be destroyed, then let it be divided. I do not, of course attach great importance to that reason, and yet it is but just to say that much of the opposition to a closer unity of the church originates in unbelief and hostility to the very mission of the church which is to extend itself over the world. Then, secondly, there are those who believe that the church is good, but still it is human, and hence not to be trusted with too much power. It is admitted that the increase of the peace of the church would be an increase of its power. But it is feared that this increase of power would bring such an increase of temptation as the church could not withstand. We should be in danger of a revival of the Inquisition and all the other abominations with which the church was cursed in the days when its formal unity was greater than at present. If I were answering this argument, instead of stating it simply, I should say that the power which the church has abused in time past was not the power which came from its true unity, the unity of Christians with one another in faith and life, but the power which it derived from an

ill-advised and unholy alliance with the state, a power which does not properly belong to it. The power of persecution did not proceed from the unity, but the secularization of the church. The Inquisition was a civil court. And inasmuch as the plea for Christian unity does not look to the unity of church and state, but simply the union of Christians with each other, the fear of a misuse of the power which unity would bring is evidently ill-founded.

The third reason for hostility to Christian union is found in the assertion that we have such a union already. There are not wanting not only excellent but eminent men, eminent for piety as well as ability, who protest warmly, in the face of all our differences and divisions, that the church is one in all essential articles of faith, that there is a spiritual and substantial unity among us, and that our differences are only superficial and seeming. Consequently they deplore the union agitation as a case of "much ado about nothing." Now it is a matter of fact and of rejoicing that there remains so much substantial unity among Christians; but this, so far from being an argument against a closer union, is an argument in its favor. If this substantial union is so good a thing, the more we have of it the better; and if we have advanced so far in that direction already, that is no reason surely why we should call a halt in our approach to unity, but rather why we should go on to perfection.

But the statement that we have arrived at substantial and essential unity already, and that our present divisions are not so much divisions of faith as divisions of field and of labor, charitable and liberal as it sounds, is simply made in defiance of the facts of the case. Everyone knows that we do have serious differences and scandalous divisions among us, that they come to the surface continually, that our peace with each other, like that of the great powers of Europe, is largely a peace of policy rather than principle, that there are Christian denominations and Christian pastors in the same city that have hardly more dealings with each other than Jews and Samaritans, and that instead of dividing out the field and laboring among ourselves on the principle of co-operation in a common work, we trench and trespass continually on one another's premises, competing and contending for supremacy.

And let it be remembered that the unity for which our Lord prayed and for which his apostles labored was not simply a spiritual and still less a sentimental unity, such as only saints can appreciate, but it was in some sense an outward and obvious unity such as the world could see and be so moved by the spectacle as to believe in the church's Head and Lord.

There is this fourth argument against the union agitation; that it is the pursuit of a phantom, the following of a forlorn hope, the attempt of the im-

practicable and impossible. When one contemplates the magnitude of our divisions, the hoary and venerable traditions which separate us, the inveteracy of religious customs and habits of thought, the great and honored names which must be renounced in some degree if we are ever to be one, and most of all when he remembers that sectarianism does not originate in these divisions, but inheres in our human nature and has been rooted and grounded in us through generations, it does seem a hopeless if not a presumptuous endeavor to overthrow all this and build on its ruins one new, united, harmonious church, whose one Master is Christ and whose one law is that by love all serve one another.

My answer to all this is that truth and time have wrought mightier miracles than this; that faith has removed more and greater mountains than those which now tower between the children of God to obstruct their freedom and their fellowship.

But by what means is this coming unity to be realized? On what broad base is this divided church to be united? Here we come to the parting of ways. It behooves each one of us to show his opinion with modesty. I suppose it is reasonable to say, however, that the means by which the church is to be united are the reverse of those by which its unity was destroyed. Now what were the causes of the church's disunity. Mainly two, I think: an excess of theology, and a lack of work.

By no means do I say that a church needs no theology, no creed. It were as sensible to say a man needs no backbone. But as it takes something more than spinal column to make a man, so it takes something more than theology to make a church. And it was because the church forgot this and abandoned herself to the sole work of theologizing and creed-making and would have nothing in heaven or earth not contained in her philosophy that she fell into fragments and factions.

The unity of the church, as I believe, is to come through the purifying, simplifying and unifying of its theology. Already theology is largely purged of its polemic spirit. There is far more tolerance for theological differences than there was a generation ago; the sects are more tolerant of each other, and in each sect there is more liberty of opinion than formerly. The proscriptive spirit is largely a thing of the past. Theological polemics, controversial preaching, religious disputation among Christians of different sects—these are strange and unheard of things to some of you. But it was not always so. If you will take pains to ransack the secondhand book stores, you will find stored on their shelves some specimen brick-bats with which orthodox and heterodox, Calvinist and Arminian, Baptist and Pedobaptist went out to battle in former days.

We have not ceased to differ about these things, but we have learned that some of these differences

are not so great as we supposed, and that none of them are to be mended by a polemical and proscriptive spirit. Not only is theology to be purged of a narrow and intolerant spirit, but of all the errors and crudities which have been foisted into it by the ill-judged though well-meaning efforts of man's wisdom.

And as it must be purified, so it must be simplified and unified. And that process is gradually going on also. Theology is gradually reconstructing itself about the person of Jesus Christ, all other articles being subjected to that, every thing cast out which conflicts with that, and any liberty tolerated which does not degrade Christ from his pre-eminent place in the faith and thought of his church. The fault of the systems is that they have reckoned from a wrong center. One has made divine sovereignty supreme ; another free agency ; one the unity, another the mercy of God. What we want is one great inclusive truth which will contain all these and set them in right relations to one another.

That truth, in the very language of Scripture, is this, "Jesus Christ the Son of God ;" "Christ, God manifest in the flesh ;" "God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses to them." This is the central, the vital, the essential truth. By this the church as founded by the apostles was held into one body. Back to this we must go, back beyond the creeds, beyond the

councils, beyond the Apostles' Creed, to this creed of the apostles we must go to find that central truth which shall unify theology and so unify the church.

And yet do not let me leave the impression that theology, however sound, can save an idle church from dissension. The path that leads back to our lost unity leads us out also into the field of labor. What we need to do is to appreciate the great work of the church, the evangelization, civilization and Christianization of all classes and nations. The mission of the church is the mission of Christ; "to preach the gospel to the poor, to heal the broken hearted; to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." And those who are opening the eyes of the church to this work and inducing us to engage in it are perhaps doing more for the promotion of Christian union than if they spent their whole lives in devising and advocating plans of union, however excellent. For if only we can see the magnitude and the urgency of the work which waits us on all sides, we shall easily see also both the necessity and the means of uniting in order to accomplish it. And though our co-operation be not very close or cordial at first, yet experience will come to our aid. If only we will walk by the same rule in the things about which we have already attained unity, consent to join

hands in the work in which we are already agreed, we shall come in due time to that unity of head and of heart which can come in no other way.

Of one thing let us all who labor and pray for the unity of Christ's people be fully persuaded, that what God has promised he is able to perform. And he has promised that no labor done in the name of his Son, however difficult it may appear and how ever long-delayed its results may be, shall be done in vain. In due time the fruit of all our labors for union will appear. Dr. Draper tells us that a sunbeam or a shadow can not fall upon a surface, no matter of what material that surface may be, without leaving upon it an indelible impression, an impression which by the application of the proper chemical agents may be made visible. So it is that the least and feeblest endeavor of a true faith in Christ leaves its trace and its impress upon the world, which shall be made manifest in time to come. No labor is lost which love for Christ inspires. Nothing done in his name is done in vain. It is only when we are without him that we can do nothing; it is only when we labor in our own name that we labor in vain. Therefore put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ. Take his name for your watchword. Believe in him, confess him, obey him and follow him. Commit thy ways and thy work unto him, and he shall bring it to pass.



